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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

SUCCESS STRATEGIES OF HIGH ACHIEVING WOMEN:  
A QUALITATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Leslie Ann Evans

December, 2009

Farzin Madjidi, Ed.D., Dissertation - Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Leslie Ann Evans

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES.....	xi
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xii
DEDICATION.....	xiii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	xiv
VITA.....	xvii
ABSTRACT.....	xviii
Chapter One: The Problem .....	1
Background of the Problem .....	2
Statement of the Problem.....	4
Purpose of the Study .....	6
Research Questions.....	6
Significance of the Study .....	7
Limitations of the Study.....	9
Assumptions of the Study .....	10
Definition of Key Terms .....	11
Organization of the Study .....	13
Summary of Chapter One .....	14
Chapter Two: Review Of The Literature .....	15
Introduction.....	15
History of Women in Business .....	15
Women’s Entry into the Workforce.....	16
The Early Years—1600 to 1800 .....	16
Expanding Prosperity—1800 to 1865.....	16
Breaking New Ground—1865 to 1914 .....	17
Two Steps Forward, One Step Back—1914 to 1960.....	21
Redefining a Woman’s Place—1960 to the Present .....	25
The Women’s Movement .....	28
Feminist Theories.....	30
Third-Wave Feminists .....	31
Recent Trends of Women in the Workplace.....	33
Trends in Women’s Income.....	35
Statistics of Women in Various Occupations .....	37
Trends in Management .....	39

	Page
Demographic Influences .....	41
Defining Career Success .....	43
Leadership and Management Theories .....	45
Trait Approach or the “Great Man” Theory .....	47
Skills Approach.....	50
Style Approach or Behavioral Theory .....	52
The Ohio State Studies.....	52
The University of Michigan Studies .....	53
The University of Texas Studies .....	53
Situational Approach .....	54
Contingency Theory.....	56
Path-Goal Theory.....	57
Leader-Member Exchange Theory .....	58
Leader-Participation Model .....	59
Transactional Leadership .....	60
Transformational Leadership .....	60
Charismatic Leadership .....	63
Visionary Leadership .....	64
Servant Leadership.....	65
Gender and Leadership .....	67
Differences Between Men and Women Leaders .....	70
Generational Differences in the Workplace.....	77
Obstacles to Success .....	79
External Obstacles .....	79
Discrimination.....	80
Stereotyping Women .....	81
The Pipeline Theory.....	86
Tokenism.....	88
Pink Collar Ghettos.....	90
Pay Inequity .....	90
Balancing Home and Work.....	91
Power .....	95
Female Competition.....	96
The Glass Ceiling.....	98
Internal Obstacles.....	101
The “Nice Girl” Syndrome .....	101
Self-Imposed Barriers .....	102
Faulty Thinking.....	103
Success Strategies .....	104
External Strategies .....	104
Education .....	105
Mentoring.....	106
Networking .....	111
Career Planning.....	113

	Page
Role Models .....	115
Performance .....	116
Internal Strategies .....	117
Life Satisfaction .....	119
Happiness .....	122
Well-Being Rankings .....	123
Summary of Chapter Two .....	125
Chapter Three: Methods .....	128
Introduction .....	128
Restatement of the Research Questions .....	128
Research Design .....	129
Feminist Research .....	129
Qualitative Design .....	130
Phenomenological Approach .....	133
Sources of Data .....	134
Population .....	134
Participant Description .....	134
Sampling Method .....	135
Purposive Sampling .....	135
Maximum Variation Sampling .....	136
Sample Size .....	137
Protection of Human Subjects .....	137
Data Collection .....	139
Interview Process .....	139
Interviewing Elites .....	141
Confidentiality .....	143
Recording and Transcription of Interviews .....	143
Validity of the Interview Protocol .....	144
Validity and Reliability of the Study .....	148
Validity .....	149
Ecological Validity .....	150
External Validity .....	150
Rigor .....	152
Reliability .....	153
Role of the Researcher .....	154
Reflexivity .....	154
Statement of Researcher Bias .....	155
Verstehen .....	156
Data Analysis .....	156
Data Reduction .....	157
Interraters .....	159
Data Display .....	160

	Page
Summary of Chapter Three.....	160
Chapter Four: Results .....	162
Introduction.....	162
Profile of the Participants.....	162
Data Collection .....	163
Data Analysis .....	167
Data Display.....	169
Research Question 1 .....	170
Interpersonal Skills .....	170
Support.....	172
Experience/Knowledge .....	173
Self-Awareness .....	173
Take Risks.....	174
Role Models .....	175
Communication.....	176
Team Leadership.....	177
Confidence .....	178
Career Planning.....	179
Mentors .....	180
Assertiveness.....	182
Flexibility.....	183
Performance .....	184
Work Ethic .....	185
Work/Life Balance.....	185
Positivity .....	187
Mobility.....	188
Networking .....	189
Integrity.....	191
Patience .....	191
Time Management .....	192
Focus.....	192
Visibility .....	193
Perseverance .....	193
Lateral Moves .....	194
Understanding Organizational Goals.....	194
Research Question 2 .....	195
Personal Characteristics .....	195
Time Demanded.....	197
Organizational Politics.....	198
Discrimination.....	199
Glass Ceiling.....	201
Stereotyping .....	202



	Page
Good Old Boys' Club .....	203
No Role Models/Mentors.....	204
No Support .....	204
Lack of Experience/Education .....	205
Upbringing .....	206
Organizational Change.....	207
Research Question 3 .....	208
Missed Opportunities .....	210
Sacrifices .....	212
First Made It.....	217
Outlook .....	220
Tangible Benefits .....	223
Summary of Chapter Four .....	230
Chapter Five: Discussion And Recommendations .....	232
Introduction.....	232
Summary of the Study .....	232
Discussion of the Findings.....	234
Results for Research Question 1 .....	234
Interpersonal Skills .....	235
Support.....	235
Experience/Knowledge .....	235
Self-Awareness .....	235
Take Risks.....	236
Role Models .....	236
Communication.....	236
Team Leadership.....	237
Confidence .....	237
Career Planning.....	238
Mentors .....	238
Assertiveness.....	238
Flexibility.....	239
Performance .....	239
Work Ethic .....	239
Work/Life Balance.....	240
Positivity .....	240
Mobility.....	240
Networking .....	241
Integrity.....	241
Patience .....	241
Time Management .....	242
Focus .....	242
Visibility .....	242

	Page
Perseverance .....	243
Lateral Moves .....	243
Understanding Organizational Goals.....	244
Summary of Themes for Research Question 1 .....	244
Results for Research Question 2 .....	245
Personal Characteristics .....	245
Time Demanded.....	246
Organizational Politics.....	246
Discrimination.....	247
Glass Ceiling .....	248
Stereotyping .....	248
Good Old Boys' Club .....	248
No Role Models/Mentors.....	249
No Support .....	249
Lack of Experience/Education.....	250
Upbringing .....	250
Organizational Change.....	251
Summary of Themes for Research Question 2 .....	251
Results for Research Question 3 .....	252
Missed Opportunities .....	252
Sacrifices.....	253
First Made It.....	255
Outlook .....	255
Tangible Benefits .....	256
Summary of Themes for Research Question 3 .....	257
Additional Comments .....	258
Limitations of the Study.....	260
Implications.....	260
Advice to Aspiring Women .....	260
Advice Regarding Life Satisfaction.....	262
Recommendations for Practice .....	263
Recommendations for Future Research.....	264
Final Thoughts .....	267
Summary of Chapter Five .....	268
REFERENCES .....	270
APPENDIX A: Participant Consent Form.....	295
APPENDIX B: Human Participant Protections Certificate .....	298
APPENDIX C: Interview Protocol .....	300
APPENDIX D: Invitation Letter.....	306

	Page
APPENDIX E: Expert Panel Letter .....	308
APPENDIX F: Interview Questions for Expert Panel.....	310
APPENDIX G: Expert Panel Review Form .....	313
APPENDIX H: Interview Questions for Participants.....	318
APPENDIX I: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter .....	321

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Studies of Leadership Traits and Characteristics.....	49
Table 2. Common Stereotypes of Women and Men .....	83
Table 3. Participant Demographics by Industry and Title.....	164
Table 4. Participant Demographics by Age, Hours Worked, and Educational Attainment .....	165
Table 5. Data Analysis Table for Coding.....	168
Table 6. Summary of Themes for Three Research Questions .....	231

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. Percent of men and women in U.S. business .....	3
Figure 2. Frequency of response for major themes identified for research question 1 .....	171
Figure 3. Frequency of response for minor themes identified for research question 1 .....	190
Figure 4. Frequency of response for themes identified for research question 2 .....	196
Figure 5. Frequency of response for themes identified for research question 3 .....	209
Figure 6. Frequency of response for subtheme missed opportunities for research question 3 .....	210
Figure 7. Frequency of response for subtheme family sacrifices identified for research question 3 .....	213
Figure 8. Frequency of response for subtheme first made it identified for research question 3 .....	217
Figure 9. Frequency of response for subtheme outlook identified for research question 3 .....	221
Figure 10. Frequency of response for subtheme tangible benefits identified for research question 3 .....	224

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to those who have contributed the most to my life, my family.

- To my Mother and Father who gave me life and show me everyday what it is to live with love and integrity
- To my children, Andrea, Ian, and Kelly who bring me great joy and make me want to be a better person
- To my sisters and brothers, Lisa, Lynne, Lawrence, Tony, Kathy, and Andy who keep me laughing and always support me

With love,

Leslie

Dr. Leslie Ann Evans

April 12, 1957 - October 09, 2009

This dissertation was edited posthumously by Leslie's friends and family. The work reflected in this project was a lifelong goal of Leslie's. She had an unquenchable thirst for knowledge and a passion for understanding how women succeed in business. Reflecting on her life, it is clear that she succeeded in school, work, and family life. May this work be an enduring reminder of Leslie's job well done. GIRL POWER!

-The Tubbs Evans family

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## VITA

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## ABSTRACT

According to the latest figures from the U.S. Labor Department, 50% of all managerial posts are held by women, yet few women hold a top position in their organization. Of the 1,000 largest revenue producing, publicly traded companies in the United States, only 20 are led by a woman. Women hold only 15.7% of all senior executive positions in Fortune 500 companies, yet traditional women's leadership styles of open communication and inclusion have been recognized as appropriate and even best practices.

Women climbing the corporate ladder face myriad challenges. In addition to the obstacles they face, the very choices women make in pursuit of satisfaction in life are fraught with difficulty and stress. However, a successful business career can also bring with it a feeling of accomplishment and other rewards. How does this affect the life of high achieving women?

The purpose of this study was to define the success strategies of high achieving women in the field of business. This entailed determining what obstacles to success these high achieving women overcame and how success affected their life satisfaction.

The framework chosen for this study was a qualitative design using a phenomenological approach, which examined the meaning of human experiences from the vantage point of those who actually experienced that phenomenon. The participants chosen held the position level of Vice President or above in Fortune 1,000 companies. The method of sampling was purposive with a maximum variation strategy. The process of data collection was through semi-structured interviews. Content analysis was used to determine common themes and validity and reliability were ensured with the contributions of the Panel of Experts and two interraters. The results of this study identified 18 major and 9

minor success strategies that high achieving women have used in combination to achieve career success and 12 obstacles that had to be overcome. With regard to life satisfaction, this study identified two negative and three positive themes which described the elements their career success has contributed to their life satisfaction. This research was aimed at helping up-and-coming women in their pursuit of career success and life satisfaction.

## CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM

*A girl nowadays must believe completely in herself as an individual. She must realize at the outset that a woman must do the same job better than a man to get as much credit for it. She must be aware of the various discriminations, both legal and traditional, against women in the business world.*  
(Earhart, 1935, as cited in Payne, 2007, p. 12)

“Leadership is one of the most valuable skills in our workplace, as well as in our society” (Matz, 2001, p. 31). A study conducted by Harvard University in September 2005 found “Nearly two-thirds (66%) of Americans agree that we have a leadership crisis in the country today” (Pittinsky, Rosenthal, Welle, & Montoya, 2005, p. 10). The same study found over 6 in 10 of those polled “believe the country would be better off if there were more women in leadership positions” (p. 10). Historically, leadership skills have been defined by men and consisted of rather aggressive, competitive, authoritarian behaviors. Much of the management literature today advocates transformational leadership as opposed to transactional leadership. The key skills associated with transformational leadership, nurturing and empowering staff to take risks in the pursuit of corporate goals, are skills which have been associated traditionally with women (Cassell, 1997). Today, women are creating a new paradigm of leadership. Preliminary research shows that women bring distinct personality and motivational strengths to leadership. Their leadership style consists of an open, consensus-building, collegial approach. They are willing to take risks, be flexible, and have a drive to get things done. As Dr. Greenberg found, “These personality qualities combine to create a leadership profile that is much more conducive to today’s diverse workplace, where information is shared freely, collaboration is vital and teamwork distinguishes the best companies” (Caliper Corporation, 2005, p. 7).

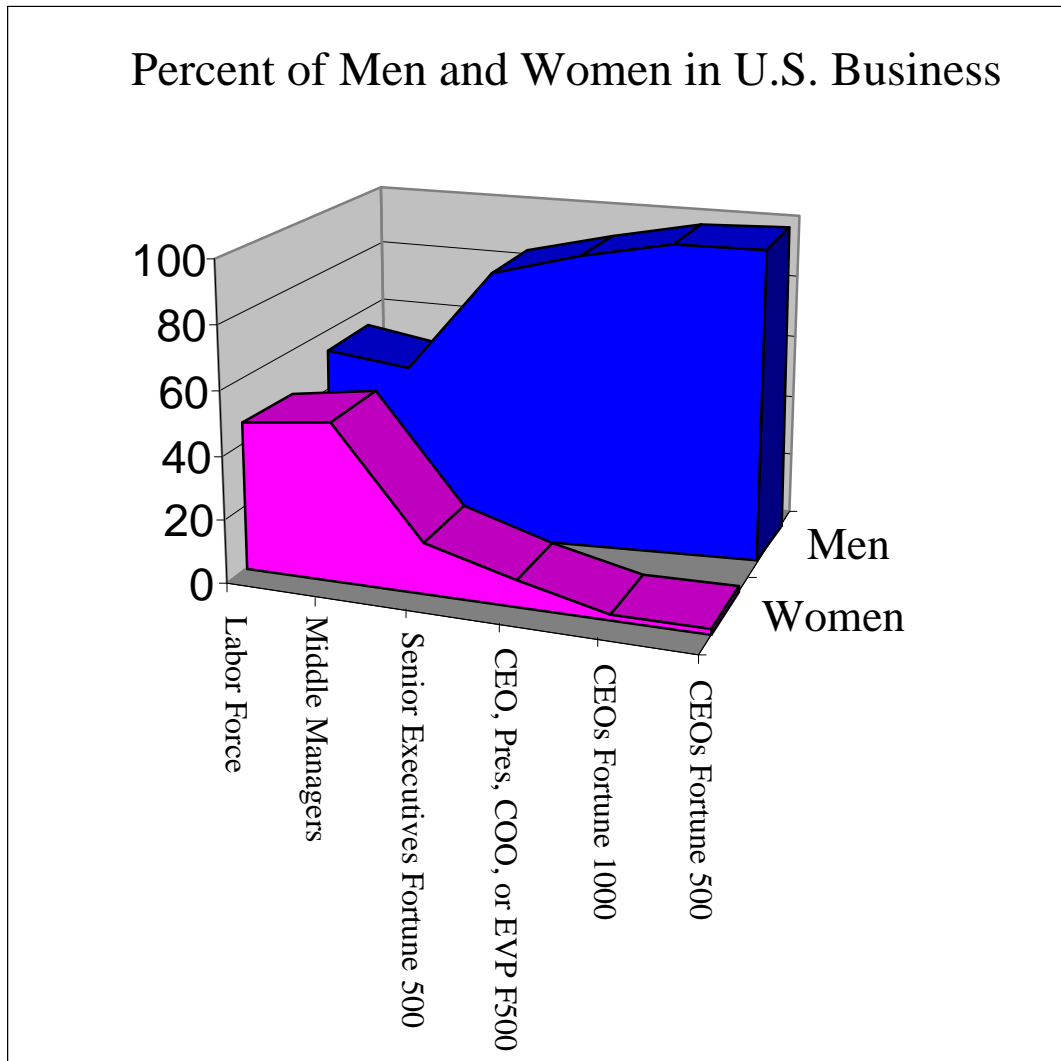
Women have proven themselves to be capable and qualified to hold leadership

positions in today's society. Andrea Jung (Chairman and CEO of Avon), Anne Mulcahy (CEO of Xerox), Carly Fiorina (former CEO of HP), Meg Whitman (President and CEO of eBay), Condoleezza Rice (U.S. Secretary of State), Sandra Day O'Connor (retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice), Hilary Rodham Clinton (U.S. Senator), Wu Yi (Vice Premier of Beijing), and Yulia Tymoshenko (Prime Minister of Ukraine) are notable examples of outstanding leadership and success in the global marketplace (MacDonald & Schoenberger, 2004, 2005). Yet, despite obvious talent and qualifications, the representation of women in the upper ranks of leadership is appallingly low.

### Background of the Problem

According to the latest figures from the U.S. Labor Department (2005a), 50% of all managerial posts are held by women, yet few women hold a top position in their organization. Of the 1,000 largest revenue producing, publicly traded companies in the United States, only 20 are led by women (Levs, 2006), which translates into 2%. Of these 20 women leaders, 8 are leading Fortune 500 companies, which equates to women holding only 1.6% of the top jobs in the nation's largest revenue producing, publicly traded companies. According to Catalyst (2004c) a nonprofit research firm, women hold only 15.7% (or 2,140 of 13,673 total) of senior executive positions in the *Fortune* 500 companies. In fact, only 7.9% or 191 women hold the title of chairman, vice chairman, CEO, president, COO, SEVP, or EVP. These dramatic percentages are illustrated in Figure 1.

The United States is not alone in its discrimination against women. According to Sczesny (2003), previous research has indicated that women are underrepresented in



*Figure 1.* Percent of men and women in U.S. business. Adapted from “Women in Business: A Snapshot,” by Catalyst, 2004c, p.1, New York: Catalyst

management positions in comparison to men all over the world. A low rate of upward movement of women within the managerial ranks has been observed (Powell, 1999).

Estimates report proportions of only around 10% of women in management positions

worldwide (e.g., for Germany, Europe, U.S.; Deal & Stevenson, 1998; Dienel, 1996). A

1992 United Nations’ study found there is no country in the world that treats its women as

well as its men (ABC News, 1992). While women make up about half the number of workers in the labor force today, they account for only two percent of the top executives in today's organizations (Levs, 2006; Matz, 2001). Herein lies the problem.

#### Statement of the Problem

The challenge women face is that even though they have achieved many gains in the workplace, the most senior positions continue to elude them in large numbers. What can women do to level the playing field? How can a more inclusive culture be created that eliminates gender bias? Who are aspiring women's role models and what strategies have they used to succeed? What obstacles to success have they overcome? Are women satisfied with the choices they have had to make in pursuit of their career aspirations?

Traditional women's leadership styles of open communication and inclusion have finally been recognized as appropriate and even best practices (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1997; Fisher, 1998; Peters, 2005; Petrick, Scherer, Brodzinski, Quinn, & Ainina, 1999; Sharpe, 2000). However, according to Antal and Kresbach-Gnath (1993), many organizations would rather invest in training programs to teach men these behaviors than promote women who already possess and exhibit them. In addition to battling men for high-level leadership positions, advancement opportunities for women are also stymied by governmental regulations and societal attitudes (Antal & Krebsbach-Gnath). According to Northouse (2004), "women's career advancement in leadership roles has been hampered by organizational, interpersonal, and personal barriers. These barriers...have...functioned to keep the number of women in leadership positions disproportionately low" (p. 281). All of these factors have left many highly qualified women frustrated and confused.

With all the obstacles women have to overcome on their ascent to the top, careers



can bring a high degree of stress into women's lives. However, a successful business career can also bring with it a feeling of accomplishment and other positive rewards. How does this affect the life of high achieving women? Life satisfaction is related to the respondent's feeling of control (Gundelach & Kreiner, 2004). Many women executives feel a certain angst if they are not experiencing the happiness and fulfillment they thought their career would bring to them. Women climbing the corporate ladder have a myriad of challenges that stand in their way. In addition to the obstacles they face, the very choices women make in pursuit of satisfaction in life are fraught with difficulty and stress.

Stanhope (1997) states that in recent decades a cultural reversal has occurred, in which the rewards of work have increased relative to those of family life. Many middle-class women came to the workplace in search of power, self-esteem, stimulation and identity. They found these things, but there was a price to pay—an expectation that non-work life would fit around their job. Women took on new identities, but the workplace and the men who control it have not evolved, which means many women still have to do the work of their old identity, in addition to their workplace duties, i.e. caregiver and homemaker. Hochschild (1997) notes that for white-collar management jobs, the workplace can be a pretty rewarding place to be. He cites expenses, travel, events, incentives and a feeling of accomplishment, which all contribute to this. There is still an overriding sense that work is the real place to be—where real things get done, where one has an important identity. Kiecolt (2003), found that women are progressively more likely to find work a haven instead of having high work-home satisfaction or finding home a haven. Kiecolt says “It appears that work has become a major source of satisfaction for women, as it is for men” (p. 23).

Whether satisfied or not, women have few role models to look to for guidance in their decisions. “Research shows that role models have a profound influence on women’s career success” (Levs, 2006, p.3). In November 2005, the Forté Foundation conducted a survey of aspiring women business leaders. The results showed 77 % of the 550 respondents reported there is an insufficient amount of women role models in business and 95 % believe it is important to see women in business profiled in the media (Pomeroy, 2006). In addition, 88 % of the survey respondents said it was important to have women role models to inspire their future success (Ramachandran, 2005). These challenges can be addressed by studying examples of what high achieving women have accomplished and determining what method they used to accomplish their goals and position. In a world of increasing globalization and diversity, women need to be recognized and rewarded for their critical roles and contributions to the success of organizations.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to define the success strategies of high achieving women in the field of business. This entailed determining what obstacles to success these high achieving women have overcome and how success has affected their life satisfaction.

#### Research Questions

To discover how to overcome the problem of the lack of advancement opportunities for women in senior leadership roles, the first two questions that must be posed are (a) What are the most common strategies that women leaders report as following to achieve career success?; (b) What obstacles to career success do women leaders report as having overcome and how has this been accomplished?; To ascertain the level of life satisfaction of this population of high achieving women, this study asked, (c) To what

extent has pursuit of career success affected life satisfaction?

### Significance of the Study

The practical importance of this study was to develop an approach built on the success strategies of high achieving women that up-and-coming women can use to develop their career path. To date, most of the available research on leadership and business has “been conducted on men, and written by men for the benefit of men” (Salas, 2005, p. 13). Even the limited research that does exist on women leaders has been focused almost exclusively on White women of European ancestry. This study interviewed a diverse sample of women who have succeeded in overcoming the obstacles to success such as breaking through the glass ceiling.

The findings of this study have multiple benefits. This body of knowledge illuminated the continuing gender gap in senior management and produced recommendations to the leadership of organizations that can serve as a primer for implementing change in tearing down the glass ceiling. This is all that stands between some of the most capable leaders of tomorrow and the success they have dreamed of and trained for. Research on the inclusion of more women in senior management can assist organizations in realizing bottom-line benefits such as retaining and motivating talented employees, which can result in lower overall operating costs. A four year study of Fortune 500 companies by Catalyst (2004a) found that those with the highest representation of women in top management experienced better financial performance than companies with the lowest representation of women. The study analyzed both Return on Equity (ROE), which was 35.1% higher, and Total Return to Shareholders (TRS), which was 34.0% higher for those companies with the highest percentage of women executives. This study

has added to the body of knowledge of what companies can do to promote women into executive positions.

This research study gives women the tools to become more successful and satisfied with their careers, which will translate into benefits for their organizations. According to Robbins (2003), organizations with more satisfied employees tend to be more effective than organizations with less satisfied employees. Robbins also points out that there is a consistent negative relationship between satisfaction and absenteeism, and satisfaction and turnover.

This research also serves as a guide for young women who are choosing their direction in high schools and colleges today. Young women look to role models to light their way and mentor them, easing their climb to the top rungs of the career ladder. Defining the success strategies of high achieving women and relating the costs of their career decisions in terms of life satisfaction has given young women the information they need to make informed decisions for their own career path.

What are the costs of being a high achiever in today's workplace? Is there a high price to pay in work/life balance, in relationships, in the decision to have children? All women who aspire to climb the corporate ladder should know these potential drawbacks so they can make an informed decision about their next career move. This study identified the perceived costs as viewed by high achieving women. In addition, this study assessed whether high achieving women felt satisfied with their career and life decisions. This information serves to inform those who dare to follow their path to success.

Lastly, this study highlighted opportunities for future research, especially in the realm of women achieving greatly while remaining satisfied with their life choices, the

development of mentoring programs by and for high achieving women, and the development of more inclusive promotion policies in the workplace.

There may always be a gap between what is ideal in the workplace and what actually exists. Stereotyping is generally one of the culprits and both men and women have some responsibility for continuing the dynamics it produces. There are inherent conflicts between views, values and work styles that must be managed. Men may still be acting on old scripts which were developed early on that were probably purely social in nature. Catalyst (1996), a non-profit organization focusing on women's career issues, conducted surveys of executives at Fortune 1,000 companies and discovered that women executives and male CEOs still do not see eye-to-eye on obstacles women face in pursuit of powerful executive positions. Women must master the art of business communication and negotiation while learning how to protect their career from saboteurs as they climb their way to the top. This study has provided strategies for addressing the inequities.

#### Limitations of the Study

1. It is stated in the methods section that the participant group will be made up of at least 12 high achieving women. This relatively small sample size may limit the generalizability of the findings.
2. The participants, although selected to represent a variety of industries, may not be truly representative of all industries, therefore limiting the generalizability of the findings.
3. Although every effort will be made to select participants with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, the entire population of female corporate leaders is very small and almost exclusively made up of White women of European

ancestry. This may limit the generalizability of the findings to a more diverse population.

4. The diversity of the selection of participants may be limited by the researcher's budget and time constraints, which may in turn limit the scope and breadth of the data being gathered.
5. The researcher's biases may be present during the interviews and interpretation process.

#### Assumptions of the Study

1. It has been stated that the purpose of this study was to define the success strategies of high achieving women. This statement assumes that there is a success strategy or strategies. Success could easily be serendipitous because there was no plan – for example: smart people of any gender get promoted; some people are in the right place at the right time; or some are promoted as a result of nepotism. This is a valuable study that will identify the career paths and characteristics of high achieving women.
2. The group of interviewees was made up of women in leadership positions from different industries within the corporate business world. The assumption is that women in different fields of business have common success strategies. Participants with differing career paths or from different industries may reveal widely differing strategies.
3. It is assumed that there are obstacles, for example, the “glass ceiling”, which impede the upward mobility of women leaders.
4. It is assumed that the participants answered all interview questions honestly,

therefore giving a true representation of the facts as they perceive them.

5. Since most leadership literature is written from a White, male, Anglo-Saxon perspective, which fails to account for cultural, ethnic and gender issues, it is not certain if the literature is generalizable to women leaders. It is assumed that there are more commonalities between men and women leaders than differences.
6. It is assumed that qualitative research is concerned primarily with process (rather than outcomes or products), interested in meaning (how people make sense of their lives, experiences, and their structures of the world), involves fieldwork, is descriptive and inductive, and that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1998).

#### Definition of Key Terms

- *High achieving women* are prominent women from the public, private, and nonprofit industries. Today's top-ranked female executives are better-educated, more determined to advance, and more apt to be "organization women." They are also more likely to be managers, to hold more senior positions, and to become chief executive officers (Gutner, 2002). The participants chosen for this study as high achieving women will hold or have held the position level of Vice President or above in their organization. For the purposes of this study, the participants will be selected only from Fortune 1,000 corporations.
- *Career success* as defined by Awkward (2005) is "the ability of a woman to define her own career goals and to accomplish those goals on her terms" (p. 35). Awkward found that career goals usually involve career advancement and

career satisfaction, which are greatly influenced by workplace practices and expectations, which are in turn influenced by societal norms and expectations. Career success in today's environment, according to the *Phoenix Business Journal* ("Career Success", 1995), is in the shape of a spiral. Employees should view their career path as a spiral. They may need to move laterally, taking time out to gain needed skills and undertake new responsibilities within their job before they can twist back up and around, ascending the spiral. In this study, the participants selected have demonstrated at least one year in their position at the Vice President level or above.

- *Success strategies* are the actions taken to attain the vision one creates. This achievement often brings rewards such as money, power, and fame. This study will look at how some extraordinarily successful women created professional success. As Sir Winston Churchill put it, "Success is going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm."
- *Obstacles to success* are impediments to career achievement that can include such things as discrimination, gender bias, the "good old boys' club", access to prime opportunities and visible assignments, lack of role models and mentors, and no well defined strategy for success (Briles, 1996; Weiss, 1999; White, 1992). In this study, the word *barriers* will be used interchangeably with *obstacles*.
- *Gender bias*—Gender is defined by the *American Heritage Dictionary* (1983) as a "classification of sex" (p. 292). Bias is defined as a "preference or inclination that inhibits impartiality; prejudice" (p.67). Hence, gender bias is



separation of gender in a way which prefers one sex over the other.

- *Glass ceiling* is a term coined in the 1970s in the United States to describe the invisible artificial barrier, created by attitudinal and organizational prejudices, which bars women from top executive jobs. It is a barrier to further advancement once women have attained a certain level. They can see the top, but cannot reach its spiral (International Labour Office, 1997).
- *Career saboteurs* are defined as actions people take, both conscious and unconscious, that interfere with or prevent success in their chosen career. According to Andrew J. DuBrin (2002), author of *Your Own Worst Enemy: How to Overcome Career Self-Sabotage*, “they are hidden barriers to success” (p. 141).
- *Life satisfaction* is the subjective part of the quality of life, a person’s feelings about their functioning and circumstances, their judgment as to their well-being (Yudofsky & Hales, 1997).
- *Leadership style* is the practice leaders use to transform values into actions, visions into realities, obstacles into innovations, separateness into solidarity, and risks into rewards (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

### Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the topic and problem, discusses the purpose of the study, presents the research questions, highlights the research’s limitations and defines the key terms. Chapter Two consists of a literature review covering the pertinent areas relevant to this study, including women in business, success strategies, obstacles to success, life satisfaction, leadership styles and

management, and differences based on gender, culture, and generation. Chapter Three consists of the research design and approach, a description of the population, data collection method, protection of human subjects, the role of the researcher, and the data analysis process. Chapter Four reports the findings of the study. Finally, Chapter Five summarizes the study by inferring conclusions based on the research findings. Recommendations for future study are considered in this final chapter.

### Summary of Chapter One

Defining the success strategies of high achieving women starts with the realization that although some women have broken through the glass ceiling, many capable women are being overlooked for senior level positions in companies all over the world. By studying what has worked for those women who have made it, other women will have a guide to assist with their ascension on the corporate ladder. They will also have the benefit of knowing the obstacles to watch out for and the costs of choosing a senior level position.

Chapter One has provided an overview of this research study. It has explained the background for the problem and stated the purpose for this research. Three research questions were posed and the significance of this study was described. Limitations and assumptions were noted and the key terms were defined. Lastly, the organization of the study was explained, providing a roadmap for the journey ahead. Next, Chapter Two will review the literature, laying a theoretical framework for the research.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

*Lift up your faces, you have a piercing need  
For this bright morning dawning for you.*

*History, despite its wrenching pain  
Cannot be unlived, but if faced  
With courage, need not be lived again.*

*Lift up your eyes upon  
This day breaking for you.*

*Give birth again  
To the dream.*  
(Angelou, 1993, Stanzas 22-25)

### Introduction

Many women today have a dream to become successful, high achieving women. As shown by the following review of the literature, women's journey in American business has been fraught with numerous obstacles. Understanding this journey, its history and obstacles, can provide insight, courage, and resolve to overcome the challenges and renew the dream of becoming successful, high achieving women. This review of the literature will provide an understanding of the history of women in the workplace, leadership and management theories, the obstacles women have to overcome on their career path, their strategies for success, and their views on life satisfaction. The differences between men's and women's leadership styles will also be explored, as well as generational differences in the workplace and the feminist movement and issues of social change. This information has informed the research and interview questions and will guide the discussion of the interview findings.

### History of Women in Business

A look at the history of women in business is important to an understanding of the

journey they are on, the obstacles they have overcome, and the magnitude of the obstacles that still lie in their path on the way to the executive suite. Astin and Leland (1991) posit, “The historical context is an important parameter in a study of societal change” (p. 12). As renowned feminist Gloria Steinem (1995) stated: “We need to know the history of our sisters—both for inspiration and for accumulating a full arsenal of ideas—and adopt what translates into the present. Very few tactics are either completely new, or completely out-of-date” (p. 384). Many of the historical cultural beliefs about women and their role in society are prevalent in today’s organizations. Overcoming these restrictions lie at the heart of this study.

### *Women’s Entry into the Workforce*

#### *The Early Years—1600 to 1800*

The familiar landscape of American history does not include many references to women. For most of these years, women had the responsibility of caring for the home and the children, which in the early years, also included spinning, weaving, knitting, gardening, baking, dairying, meat smoking, soap making, and poultry raising. Even in wealthy families where the White women had slaves or servants to do the work, they were responsible for seeing that all the aforementioned tasks were done correctly (Opdycke, 2000; Rapoport & Bailyn, 2005).

#### *Expanding Prosperity—1800 to 1865*

Rising incomes, the availability of immigrant servants, and the availability of more goods in the marketplace gave middle- and upper-class women more time for volunteer activities. They took on the social causes of the day such as temperance, child welfare, and the abolition of slavery. They also volunteered during the civil war as nurses, fund raisers,

and in supply services. Unfortunately, Native American women, African American women, and immigrant women did not benefit from these changes (Opdycke, 2000).

#### *Breaking New Ground—1865 to 1914*

The period between the Civil War and World War I offered new opportunities to many women. “By 1900, more than five million American women (about 20% of all women) were working for pay” (Opdycke, 2000, p. 52). The most significant gains were made in the workplace with women breaking into white-collar occupations. “Already by 1900, most of the country’s secretaries, teachers, librarians, and nurses were women” (p. 52). Women found it much harder to make inroads into higher-status, male-dominated fields such as law, medicine, art, and literature. During the period between 1865 and 1914, female pioneers took the first steps of persuading professional schools to admit women and fighting for the right to take the necessary licensure exams.

*Service jobs.* Service jobs accounted for about 40% of the positions held by America’s five million working women. Whether in private homes or in hotels, hospitals, restaurants, and laundries, service work was not desirable because of the heavy physical demands, low pay, and long hours. Although service jobs in private homes were the most common, they were the least desirable because the work was perceived as demeaning, the employers were often overly critical of the servants’ dress, speech, and private lives, in addition to their work performance, and live-ins were sometimes exposed to sexual harassment from the men of the household. Jobs as household servants were held by the two groups with the fewest options: African Americans and immigrants. African Americans provided an extremely large labor pool “because racial restrictions excluded them from nearly every nonservice occupation except agricultural labor” (Opdycke, 2000,

p. 67).

*Industrial jobs.* Industrial jobs opened up to women at the turn of the century and manufacturing became the second largest female occupation, employing more than a million women (or 25% of working women). Factories ranged from crowded sweatshops to shoe factories, textile mills, cigar factories, and canneries. The working conditions in the factories were often poor (long hours, low pay, dirty and unsafe working conditions, and periods of unemployment) and female workers organized strikes to call attention to the conditions they faced.

According to Opdycke (2000), many men resisted the increasing use of female workers because they felt it accelerated the process of “*deskilling* in which complicated tasks were broken down into steps so simple that they could be done by the cheapest labor available: women and children” (p. 68). Most factories maintained two gradations of work: one set of skilled jobs performed by men and another set, at the low end of the pay scale, assigned to women. For example, at a food processing plant, men would do the baking while women would be restricted to frosting and packaging. According to Opdycke,

No amount of talent or industriousness could qualify a woman to be trained for a “man’s job,” and even women who had somehow acquired the skills were not allowed to practice them. Any employer who permitted a woman to cross this line risked a strike by his male employees. (p. 68)

Wage scales were calibrated to this gender based hierarchy of skills. For example, in a cigar factory, male hand rollers earned \$10 per week while the females (who were only allowed to strip the tobacco leaves) earned \$5 per week.

Male workers and employers justified this practice by arguing that women did not carry the burden of supporting a family and they were only in the workforce on a temporary basis. While it is true that many women left the workforce early for a variety of reasons,

most female factory workers (predominately single women, widows, and divorcees) were as dependent on their earnings as any man. In fact, many women supported parents, siblings, or children. According to Opdycke (2000),

The result of the persistent double standard was that male workers...lived under the constant threat of having their jobs reorganized to be performed by cheaper female labor, while many women spent their working lives on the very edge of subsistence. (p. 69)

Margaret Mead, renowned cultural anthropologist, observed that every society divides its tasks between men and women. She found that whatever tasks that men do are considered more valuable, which makes the men more powerful than the women (Estrich, 2001).

*White-collar jobs.* The remaining 35% of the female labor force was equally split between secretarial work, sales, and professional occupations (such as teaching). The pay earned by this 35% of the workforce was only slightly higher than that earned by service or factory workers; however, the working conditions were better, the status higher, and the hours shorter. Even though white-collar occupations were opening up to women, gender discrimination still held “in the fact that women were paid significantly less than men for doing the same job and that supervisors were nearly always male” (Opdycke, 2000, p. 67).

On the whole, these new options were a welcome alternative to the traditional option for women which was domestic service. Yet even with these new opportunities, most women left the workforce after marriage. In fact, “only 6% of married women were employed, compared to 44% of single women and 33% of widows and divorcees” (Opdycke, 2000, p. 66).

*Women’s traditional role.* Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the prevailing belief was that women should inhabit a *separate sphere* centered on home and family (Estrich, 2001). According to Opdycke, (2000), it was accepted that “the late

teen years represented a crucial period during which a young woman must find a man whom she could trust to love and support her for the rest of her life” (p. 60). Divorce was both difficult and repugnant, making the right choice imperative. “To win the right man, a young woman had to be attractive but not flashy, responsive but not too eager, virtuous but not dull, amusing but not competitive” (p. 60). This was imperative to ensure that the woman would “get to play the roles for which she had been trained: wife and mother” (p. 60). According to Matz (2001), “Twenty-first century women no longer feel this need to be rescued. These modern women no longer measure their worth by their spouse’s position, and their adolescence is not preparation for marriage, but rather a time for development of their own self-confidence and skills” (p. 23).

*Women in college.* In 1910, less than 3% of the US population (ages 18 to 24) was enrolled in college. The number of college students had doubled since the Civil War and women played an important role in that increase. In 1860, only three colleges admitted women. By 1910, many colleges became coeducational and a number of female colleges opened. Women attendees grew to nearly 40% of those enrolled in college. Although college provided women with wider intellectual opportunities, “it did not provide the same career opportunities that it did for men” (Opdycke, 2000, p. 74). The first White female received a college law degree in 1870 and the first Black woman in 1872. By 1920, women were accepted by every state bar and most law schools, yet once they graduated, most areas of the law were closed to them. Most women who practiced law were relegated to family practice rather than corporate law (Opdycke, 2000).

The medical profession was even more restrictive for women. Most university-based schools accepted only men. Women who did earn a medical degree faced



many obstacles. In 1849, the first medical degree was granted to an American woman, however, by 1891, there were still only six hospitals training female doctors. The field of nursing offered more opportunities for women. Between 1890 and 1910, 120 nursing schools were established in Pennsylvania alone. Although nurses were not required to have college degrees, those who did became the leaders of the field, directing its training and broadening its scope into areas such as public health (Opdycke, 2000).

Many educated women, knowing the demands that marriage and family placed on women and the difficulty they would find in combining these obligations with careers, chose to remain single. An unprecedented number of female college graduates—nearly half—pioneered the single life. They combined professional fulfillment with emotional relationships with other women in a way that marriage would not have allowed. Called spinsters by some, they portrayed the image of the new contemporary, self-sufficient American woman known as the Gibson Girl (Opdycke, 2000).

#### *Two Steps Forward, One Step Back—1914 to 1960*

The early 1900s brought more opportunities for women as some joined the Navy and Marines during World War I, and during World War II, women were accepted into all five branches of the military. Yet after each period of women assuming increasing responsibilities in the workforce, followed a period during which traditional gender roles were reaffirmed (Rapoport & Bailyn, 2005).

*The war years.* According to Opdycke (2000), “The most significant expansion of female roles occurred during the two world wars” (p. 80). During World War I, females were accepted into military duty for the first time by both the Navy and Marines. Although their numbers were small and they performed only clerical duties, their presence

established a precedent for World War II when every military branch established a female corps. During World War II, nearly 400,000 women served their country. They were offered an unprecedented range of jobs, including radar specialist, laboratory assistant, medical technician, airplane and auto mechanic, telephone operator, translator, chauffeur, radio intelligence officer, aerial gunnery instructor, photographer, machinist, air traffic controller, parachute rigger, flight instructor, nurse, and clerical worker. “Despite pervasive gender distinctions, military duty introduced women to new occupations, the experience of command, and the pride of serving their country in a way that few women had done before” (p. 80).

During both world wars, jobs in private industry that had previously been described as too difficult for women began to open up and women were recruited as soon as the men marched off to war. Just as in the military, women were recruited to take the place of men in private industry, especially in defense work. During World War I, women made up 20% of the labor force in previously male only jobs such as electrical machinery and aviation. During World War II, although neither the government nor private employers did much to accommodate working women’s problems (such as the need for childcare), wives joined the labor force in such large numbers that in 1945, for the first time in American history, married workers outnumbered single workers and women over age 35 outnumbered younger ones (Opdycke, 2000). Although the women always earned less than the men were paid (approximately 65% of what men were paid), the jobs paid considerably more than traditional female occupations. Black women, who attained few of the war-related jobs, improved their status by filling the jobs that White women left behind, jobs that were previously closed to them. These wartime jobs paid good wages and gave women new

challenges and a sense of usefulness.

Many women were resentful when they were let go to make room for returning soldiers. Women were also dismissed during the Great Depression of the 1930s because of the widespread belief that only male workers had families to support. Opdycke (2000) found that

When women take on new responsibilities, the social impact of their changed role is strongly influenced by the way their behavior is interpreted by their contemporaries....One theme dominated the public response: the idea that in assuming new tasks, women were functioning as gallant but temporary substitutes for men. (p. 81)

Both the government and the media asserted the idea that Rosie the Riveter deserved praise for helping to build airplanes during wartime but once things returned to normal, women should go back to depending on men to take care of them (Halper, 2001; Shoars, 2005).

*Media influence.* “In the 1920s, and even more dramatically during the 1950s, homemaking was once again presented as women’s only truly satisfying occupation” (Opdycke, 2000, p. 81). Both the government and the media portrayed the image of a typical family as one with the father as breadwinner and the mother at home in a suburban kitchen. In addition to reinforcing the emphasis on women’s domestic obligations, this image became an icon of Cold War rhetoric, adding the burden of patriotism to women’s obligations. Also, the media rarely showed working mothers which effectively hid from view the experiences of large numbers of women, especially African Americans and Latinas, but also a growing number of White women.

Another trend the media involved themselves in was the commoditization of women. During the 1920s, a growing segment of American commerce turned to displaying pretty young women for profit. Industries such as cosmetics and fashion increasingly based

promotions on women's looks. The burgeoning film industry found women's looks to be a valuable commodity. In fact, Opdycke (2000) found that

Men held commanding positions in the film industry as studio heads, producers, and directors, but in the one occupation where physical appearance mattered—performing—the top female stars not only equaled men's earning power but outdid them, a pattern not to be found in any other industry at that time. (p. 95)

In 1921, the Miss America pageant was launched as a tribute to unspoiled American womanhood. Dissenters, however, held that it was just a bathing suit competition designed to encourage tourism in Atlantic City. The same debate continues today. The increasing commercial use of feminine beauty was a mixed blessing for women. Although it had opened new female careers which led to increased financial success, it also reinforced the concept that women were to be judged primarily by their appearance.

*Suffrage.* In addition to seeking more opportunity in the workplace, women (the *first-wave feminists*) had been demanding the right to vote since as far back as 1848. The prevailing thought at the time of the suffrage movement was that politics were too rough for the female character and would sully their purity. It was also thought that women were too dependent on men to cast an independent vote. Finally in 1920, after over 70 years of struggle, the passage of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution gave women the right to vote. However, racial discrimination (practiced by women as well as men) at the state level forced most southern Black women to wait until the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

*Work between the wars.* According to Opdycke (2000), "The greatest change in women's employment between 1910 and 1940 was the growing number of women in white-collar occupations" (p. 90). The proportion of women doing white-collar jobs rose from 25% to almost 50%. This trend reflected the growing importance in the American economy of the service sector and the decline in immigration after World War I. Service

sector opportunities open to women included sales, education, communications, medical care, banking, insurance, and entertainment. As the demand for workers in these industries outran the supply of men available, women were chosen to fill the gap. White-collar work for women rarely meant careers as business executives or lawyers. It involved low-paying jobs such as secretaries or school teachers. Opdycke (2000) found that:

Even when women moved into tasks formerly assigned to men, the effect was generally to lower the prestige of the jobs rather than to raise the prestige of the women. For example, clerical positions had often represented—for men—the first rung on the business career ladder. But as these occupations became feminized, their salary levels declined and their link to advancement disappeared. Once that happened, few men chose to enter these fields; by 1940, women accounted for more than 90 percent of the workforce in such occupations as librarian, nurse, telephone operator, and stenographer. (p. 90)

Despite the increasing opportunities for women in white-collar positions, most women still earned their living in service or manufacturing jobs.

Jobs in the service and manufacturing industries were subject to long hours and dangerous working conditions. Women's advocates argued that women should be protected from these harsh conditions by legislation. They also felt that winning these rights for women would improve conditions for all workers. Dissenters argued that protective legislation made it more expensive to hire women and would disadvantage them in the job market. In the long run, women would gain more from equality than from special protection (Opdycke, 2000). The debate continued on for decades.

#### *Redefining a Woman's Place—1960 to the Present*

The first half of the twentieth century, while it brought more choices for women's work outside the home, brought little real change to the lives of American women. As the eminent feminist, Betty Friedan (2001) wrote in 1963, "There was a strange discrepancy between the reality of our lives as women and the image to which we were trying to

conform” (p. 9). “Friedan maintained that a life devoted exclusively to husband and children left many women feeling empty and unfulfilled” (Opdycke, 2000, p. 112). Although women had won the right to vote in 1920, “There was no ‘woman’s vote’; women voted as their husbands did. No pollster or political candidate talked about ‘women’s issues’; women were not taken that seriously, women didn’t take themselves that seriously” (Friedan, 2001, p. xvi). By 1960, women were experiencing a growing dissatisfaction with the status quo and a yearning for something more to their lives (Friedan, 2001; Opdycke).

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy, on the urging of his only female senior advisor, established the President’s Commission on the Status of Women, chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt. Executive Order 10980 that established the commission described the conditions that led to the commission’s mandate:

Prejudices and outmoded customs act as barriers to the full realization of women’s basic rights that should be respected....It is in the national interest to promote the economy, security, and national defense through the most efficient and effective utilization of the skills of all persons; and whereas in every period of national emergency women have served with distinction in widely varied capacities but thereafter have been subject to treatment as a marginal group whose skills have been inadequately utilized; and...women should be assured the opportunity to develop their capacities and fulfill their aspirations on a continuing basis irrespective of national exigencies. (Lewis, 2001, p. 1)

The final report of the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women, published in 1963, revealed the following:

- Women were severely underrepresented in the upper levels of government, business, and most professions.
- Provisions for services that were critical to working women, such as maternity leave and child care, were not being provided by either government or private

industry.

- Women's wages had actually declined compared to men's during the previous decade.
- Wives had little claim on assets they helped their husbands acquire.
- Women held few elective offices.
- Women represented half the U.S. population.
- Women had been voting for 40 years.
- Women accounted for one out of every three American workers. (Opdycke, 2000, p. 108)

The Presidential report awakened lawmakers to the inequities women faced in their daily lives, although it spurred little government action. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed and included a prohibition against sexual discrimination but in actuality did little to prevent this type of behavior. This awakening helped to fuel a feminist movement that catapulted women's issues into the national spotlight. Macklem (2004) explained further, "While the feminist movement has succeeded, more or less, in opening the doors to the world of work for women, it has utterly failed to provide a path for balancing the demands of a career with those of parenthood" (p. 25).

During the last few decades of the twentieth century, the proportion of women in the workplace increased dramatically. Even mothers of very young children joined the workforce in large numbers. Meanwhile, the role of the homemaker was changing because fewer women regarded this work as life-work. Increasingly, housework was done by women who had already worked a full day outside the home. This "double-shift" was a source of stress for many women at all levels of the occupational scale (Opdycke, 2000).

### *The Women's Movement*

Inspired by their participation in the civil rights movement and frustrated by gender discrimination, women (called *second-wave feminists*) began looking for ways to assert their citizenship. The women's movement began in the mid-1960s and gave them that chance. Inspired by Betty Friedan's seminal book, *The Feminine Mystique* (first published in 1963) which articulated the struggles women had been dealing with for years, women joined feminist leaders to promote the cause of female equality through participation in protest marches, political lobbying, "consciousness-raising" sessions, and a series of groundbreaking lawsuits (Opdycke, 2000; Rapoport, & Bailyn, 2005). As Betty Friedan (2001) warned:

The problem that has no name—which is simply the fact that American women are kept from growing to their full human capacities—is taking a far greater toll on the physical and mental health of our country than any known disease. (p. 364)

Friedan advocated a reshaping of the cultural image of femininity that would allow women to reach their full potential.

Integral to the feminist movement was the founding of the National Organization of Women (NOW) in 1966 by Betty Friedan and others attending the Third National Conference of the Commission on the Status of Women. Friedan served as the organization's first president. Their goal was to "bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, assuming all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in a truly equal partnership with men" (Freeman, 1975, p. 55). NOW's top priority was to eliminate discrimination and harassment in the workplace, schools, the justice system, and all other sectors of society. This priority continues today, along with several other prominent concerns (National Organization for Women [NOW], 2006). Women



leaders of this era “came to recognize leadership as a group effort....The [movement] provided support for their concerns...[and] taught them the effectiveness of collective action to bring about change” (Astin & Leland, 1991, p. 34).

Continuing a united women’s movement was difficult as feminists struggled to agree on which issues to pursue and the position to be taken on each. Women’s issues ran the gamut from marriage and politics to workplace issues and gay rights. Many housewives mistook the feminists’ critique of domesticity as an attack on their own life choices. Many critics of the movement feared passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), as advocated by the women’s movement, would threaten legal protections such as alimony, child support, and exemption from the draft. A passionate Stop ERA campaign succeeded in halting ratification of the amendment. Steinem (1995) has said reading or hearing the actual words of the amendment (Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.) would be the most reliable path to its support and was saddened by the fact that most major media companies have not done investigative reports to uncover the fallacies of the opposition’s arguments. Despite this setback, the women’s movement did make headway in bringing women’s rights into the consciousness of the American people (Opdycke, 2000).

The movement lasted for about a decade and then cooled as the nation moved on to other social issues of the day such as the Vietnam War, Nixon and the Watergate scandal, and a weak national economy. Even though the feminist movement quieted, women continued to face issues that were difficult to handle alone. Starting in the mid-1970s, the trend of the two income family took hold when men’s wages declined so significantly that most wives had to go to work just to meet expenses. There was also a significant increase in

the number of women acting as head of the household. Both trends led to more women in the workforce. Although combining home and work responsibilities was stressful, working mothers reported deriving satisfaction and a feeling of importance from their work (Opdycke, 2000). By 1980 and the election of Ronald Reagan as President, conservatism was the norm which translated into cutbacks in many government programs, the new “antifeminist” movement, and the failure of the Equal Rights Amendment.

By the end of the twentieth century, the core issue of the feminist movement, “that women deserved to be taken seriously and treated equally, had profoundly influenced American society” (Opdycke, 2000, p. 109). Some of the gains made over the last few decades were:

- New laws prohibiting gender discrimination and sexual harassment
- Female representation in the arts, humanities, and social sciences
- Improved maternal leave provisions
- A growing share of electoral offices
- Rising wages in relation to men’s
- An increased presence in the upper levels of business, government, and the professions

Although many gains were made over the last few decades, women remained far from equal with men.

### *Feminist Theories*

Feminists of all types: postmodern, protectionist, radical, multicultural, and social constructionists—just to name a few, all challenge aspects of social constructs and gender inequalities that negatively impact men and women. According to Jordan (2006):

In order to understand gender inequalities in executive achievement, it is necessary to review...social constructs proposed by feminist thinkers. Feminists indicate men have more privileges in society, and these privileges have created disadvantages for females....A patriarchal approach [which is prevalent in corporate business] sees men as the norm and women as different. Unfortunately, patriarchal approaches have also seen women as inferior. (p. 12)

Feminine theorist Catherine MacKinnon (1987) described the dominance model which was used when most jobs were designed. "The expectation [was] that the person that filled them would be free of extensive childcare responsibilities" (p. 37). Leadership positions, with their demands for long hours and flexibility, are therefore dominated by men.

Bell Hooks (2000), renowned feminist theorist, looks forward to the day when we can live, "in a world where there is no domination, where females and males are not alike or even always equal, but where a vision of mutuality is the ethos shaping our interaction" (p. 1). She reminds us that "men are not the enemy" (p. 1) and that feminism is, simply put, a movement to end sexist thinking and action. Bell Hooks also reminds us that "Without males as allies in [the] struggle, feminist movement will not progress" (p.1). Hooks notes that "An important feminist agenda for the future has to be to realistically inform men about the nature of women and work so that they can see that women in the workforce are not their enemies" (p. 53).

### *Third-Wave Feminists*

Many people ask: What happened to the women's movement? Estrich (2001) thinks that many simply no longer saw the need for it, but she thinks that this is wrong. Although most women in America believe the country has not done enough to ensure equality for women, they do not consider themselves feminists. At the rate we are going, it will take approximately 270 years before women achieve parity as top executives in corporate America and 500 years before achieving parity in Congress (Estrich).

The women's movement of the 1970s and 1980s opened many doors for women. These advances benefited both men and women, for example, relationship-oriented management styles, an increased focus on work-life balance, and a more tolerant office environment (Mooney, 2005). These changes, while positive, do not eclipse serious problems that exist for working women.

Renowned feminist Gloria Steinem (1995) explained why allowing the status quo in the workplace was not in women's best interest:

The status quo protects itself by punishing all challengers, especially women whose rebellion strikes at the most fundamental social organization: the sex roles that convince half the population that its identity depends on being first in work or in war, and the other half that it must serve worldwide as unpaid or underpaid labor. (p. 126)

Steinem went on to point out that integration of women into the workforce “without equal power means going right back to our usual slots in the hierarchy” (p. 171). She also noted that “The patriarchal nuclear [family] acceptable to the right wing (father as breadwinner, woman at home with children) excludes about 85% of all American households” (p. 169).

Steinem (1995) does acknowledge that some men are trying to break down the stereotypes and competitiveness that the male-dominant culture has imposed on them. They are becoming more open to a diverse workforce. Women continue to work hard to break down the barriers in the workplace. Steinem advocates networking as the primary way for women to work together to change what individually women cannot.

Steinem (1995) likens networking to the consciousness-raising groups of the 1970s, where women can discover mutual support groups. According to Steinem:

The great strength of feminism—like that of the black movement here [and] the Gandhian movement in India...—has always been the encouragement for each of us to act, without waiting and theorizing about some future takeover at the top. (p. 384)

Astin and Leland (1991) found that their respondents, three generations of women leaders, thought the graying of the women's movement was worrisome. They believed that young women were the beneficiaries of the successes of the women's movement but took a lot for granted. There was concern about a lack of feminist identity among young professionals. The respondents believed a great deal of information and survival skills were needed by young women. According to Estrich (2001),

What has been missing from the women's movement is women helping women...those of us who have made it, or gotten close, have a twofold obligation: to help our peers get the last inch, or foot, and to help young women by making it easier for them than it has been for us"(p. xxiv).

Women helping women is what this research study is about—from the mouths of those who have made it to the top executive positions in the Fortune 1,000.

### *Recent Trends of Women in the Workplace*

By the end of the twentieth century, three patterns emerged with regard to women in the workplace: greatly increased numbers of working women, a much wider variety of occupations open to women, and despite the new opportunities, most women continued to hold traditionally female positions. The first trend, the increased number of women in the workforce, had two main contributors. The number of married women with jobs doubled from 1960 to 1995. In addition, the percentage of women with children under the age of six rose from 19% to 64%. In addition to women's rising career aspirations, affirmative action laws that encouraged female hiring, some increase in day care, and flexible scheduling, the greatest influence on the increase of women in the workplace was the steady decline in the value of men's wages after 1973. This made it difficult for most families to live on one income (Opdycke, 2000; Rapoport & Bailyn, 2005). A generation earlier, married women

seldom worked unless they were poor. By 2000, the two-income family had become the norm (Opdycke, 2000).

The second trend, the wider variety of occupations open to women, was evidenced by women's strong presence in previously male dominated professions such as architecture, medicine, and the law. By the 1990s, women accounted for nearly half the workforce in traditionally male fields such as public administration, financial management, journalism, and biological research. Even with a strong presence in these fields, women continued to be underrepresented in virtually all the best-paid, highest-status positions within each field. Although some women did intentionally choose less demanding jobs that allowed them more flexibility to combine their responsibilities of home and child rearing with their jobs, personal preferences did not explain the pattern of female employment. In addition, some very ambitious and talented women were passed over for promotions because of doubts about their capacity or commitment. This phenomenon was called hitting the "glass ceiling"—the point beyond which the men in charge were not comfortable with female advancement. So, even though a much wider variety of occupations were available to women, "women's careers continued to be affected by their disproportionate responsibility for child-rearing and by lingering patterns of gender discrimination" (Opdycke, 2000, p. 115).

The third trend was the continuance of women working in traditionally female occupations, even though more opportunities now existed for them. The traditionally female occupations consisted of such work as dental assistants, kindergarten teachers, secretaries, child care workers, nurses, bookkeepers, hairdressers, payroll clerks, telephone operators, and bank tellers. As of 1996, these occupations still employed a workforce that

was more than 90% female (Opdycke, 2000). Cornell University (2003) examined this trend based on statistics from the U.S. Department of Labor and found the trend still holds true. Garbrecht (2004) explained that gender roles and career aspirations are highly valued components of identity. When women construct their identities, they make choices about what roles to prioritize, balancing their interests and abilities with societal expectations. For the psychological well being that comes from committing to identities that are socially valued, women often choose gender traditional careers. Additional research concurs and posits that women's roles and career choices are driven by culturally embedded norms. Thus, women's roles as caregivers limit their career aspirations (Edson, 1988; Tallerico, 2000).

In addition to facing internal obstacles to advancement, low wages and benefits, and poor working conditions; women at every occupational level had to deal with two problems: "sexual harassment in the workplace and the persistent 'double shift'—the expectation that women should spend their days doing their paid jobs and their nights and weekends doing the family housekeeping" (Opdycke, 2000, p. 115). Polls conducted from 1972 to 1994 showed that most people thought "that women should take care of running their homes and leave running the country up to men" (p. 115). This trend started to reverse itself in 1991.

#### *Trends in Women's Income*

By the end of the twentieth century, virtually every age group, race, educational level, and social class of women earned less money than men. Even though women had entered a greater variety of occupations and millions had earned college degrees, women's earnings still averaged only 76% of men's (Herman, 1999; Opdycke, 2000). By 2002, they

had reached 78% of men's earnings (Chao & Utgoff, 2004). This represented progress since from 1959 to the early 1980's, the ratio had been stuck around 60% (Herman, 1999; Opdycke, 2000). In 1999, the U.S. Department of Labor found that the earnings of young women averaged 91 cents for every dollar earned by young men. The gap widened as women aged with women ages 45 to 54 earning just 67% of what men earned and women ages 55 to 64 earning 66%. In 1999, White women earned 75 cents for every dollar earned by White men, African American women earned 65 cents and Hispanic women earned 55 cents comparatively (Herman). The U.S. Department of Labor found that about 40% of the pay gap could not be explained by differences between men and women's experiences, skills, or jobs. "It appears to be largely the product of stubborn discrimination" (Herman, p. 11).

Of the explainable difference, one reason for women's lower earnings was the fact that so many worked in poorly paid occupations and industries such as clerical work or service jobs. In addition was the fact that the tradition in every industry was to prefer males for all supervisory positions, which in turn perpetuated the income disparity. Also, men had more seniority in the workplace, higher rates of union membership, and wider access to the informal networks that led to raises and promotions. Lastly, male executives had wives who devoted themselves to supporting their husbands' careers, freeing them from all non-work responsibilities. Women typically entered the workforce later, took a few years off in mid-career, chose to work part time, and avoided positions that required travel or long hours—all because of the responsibilities of raising their children. These decisions cost women in terms of both lost raises and lost opportunities to keep pace with their male coworkers (Bernstein, 2004; Herman, 1999; Hewlett, 2002; Mayer, 2004; Opdycke, 2000).



Education also factored into this equation. Although the trend is that young women are enrolling in college more than young men (70% to 64%; Herman, 1999), young single mothers often found it hard to complete their education, which in turn made it hard to earn an adequate living for the rest of their life. Women, single or married, with young children at home also found it difficult to attain more education, which in turn stymied their earning potential. Women's lower earning capacity combined with their role as primary parent has led many women to fall below the poverty line, which has been dubbed "the feminization of poverty" (Opdycke, 2000).

Poverty is also a concern for women as they age. Women's earning potential contributes to the quality of their life after retirement. Since women have usually worked less consistently and in less well-paid careers, their own savings and retirement income is often limited. In 1997, more than one third of all elderly women (two thirds of African Americans and Latinas) were living in or near poverty (Opdycke, 2000). In 1997, 60% of the working poor were women, with minority women more than twice as likely as White women to be poor (Herman, 1999). The rates for men were much lower.

Women workers also face a pension gap. Fewer than 40% of female workers in private industry are covered by a pension compared to 46% of men. Only 32% of current female retirees have a pension compared to 55% of men. In addition, the average female pension benefit is about half that of men, due to women's lower wages (Herman, 1999). Advances in health have increased women's life expectancy to 79.6 years, compared to 73.4 years for men (Opdycke, 2000). As women live longer, it is imperative that they make the most productive use of their earning years.

*Statistics of Women in Various Occupations*

According to Estrich (2001), in 2000 just 63 of the top 2,500 earners at Fortune 500 companies were women. In addition, she noted that only 8% of partners at the Big Five accounting firms were women. Also, 14% of partners at the top 250 U.S. law firms were women. In medical schools, 43% of new students were women, 26% of faculties were women, 7% of deans, 6.5% of faculty chairs, and only 11% of the full professors were women. According to Tischler (2004), although the number of female doctors has increased overall, the top earning fields of cardiology, gastroenterology, and orthopedic surgery are still 93.4% male. The Department of Labor Statistics published these figures for 2002: women represent 19.4% of dentists, 4.25% of airplane pilots, and 10.8% of engineers (Mooney, 2005). In the movie industry, 20% of the writers and 6.8% of the directors are women (Estrich, 2001). As startling as these numbers appear, the corresponding numbers for women of color are much worse. “When people speak of making inroads into corporate America, they almost always mean White women....The appropriate metaphor for minority managers was not a glass ceiling, but a concrete barrier” (Estrich, pp. 78–79).

The ascent of women to executive positions in the radio industry has been slow. As of 2002, 15% of executives in the radio industry were women. The glass ceiling in the male-dominated radio industry is a key factor in the lack of women in these positions (Shoars, 2005). While the advancement of women in all industries is of public concern, the communications industries fill a special role in society. Media companies help shape and define what the public thinks “is important and normal and who has status and power; media also communicate what the national agenda should be” (p. 12). The media also contributes to the proliferation of stereotypes when they give wide publicity to the negative

actions of a few members of a particular group or invent fantasy plot lines for entertainment. More women in executive positions in the communications industries would help ameliorate this problem and lead to more balanced reporting and programming.

During the 1990s, in both the FBI and in local and state police forces, females accounted for only 1 in 10 officers (Opdycke, 2000). A recent study found the percentage of women in law enforcement, 11.2 %, remains drastically low. Of that 11.2 %, current statistics show that only 7.3 % of sworn female officers hold top command level positions. Additionally, more than half of law enforcement agencies do not have any women in command level positions (National Center for Women and Policing, 2001).

In 2002, a study by the U.S. Department of Labor found that only 4% of the nation's fire fighters were women (Chao & Utgoff). In 2002, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, 34% of women worked in a managerial position or professional specialty occupation compared to 22% in 1983. Although 55% of persons employed in professional specialty occupations were women, only 11% of engineers were women and only 19% of dentists were women. In contrast, 98% of preschool and kindergarten teachers were women and 93% of registered nurses were women (Chao & Utgoff, 2004). Research has shown that until women represent 15% to 25% of a profession, colleagues view them as an isolated and disruptive presence (Jamieson, 1995).

### *Trends in Management*

In 1993, Schein stated “The ‘think manager, think male’ perspective of today’s managers is the same as the perceptions held by male corporate counterparts 15 years earlier” (p. 26). Nearly a decade later, this thinking still prevailed. Dennis and Kunkel (2004) found “being male and having masculine characteristics continues to be associated

with positions of leadership” (p. 3). This thinking does not prevail in the United States alone. Peters found that as of a few years ago, women occupied 4% of the top management jobs at U.S. companies. In Britain, women held 3%, in the European Union the figure was 2%, and in Japan it was less than 1%. It is not just in business that women are underrepresented. Marie C. Wilson advised that “Internationally, the United States ranks 60th in women’s political leadership, behind Sierra Leone and tied with Andorra” (as cited in Peters, 2005, p. 108). “Some businesses view women only as workhorses, well-suited for demanding careers in middle management but not for prime jobs. These undercurrents of bias in Corporate America infuriate many women, who then bail out rather than navigate unsupportive terrain” (Sharpe, 2000, ¶ 7).

In 2001, Catalyst released the findings of a study comparing the views of women in corporate leadership and male CEOs in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. According to American CEOs, when asked (in 1996) if organizational opportunities for women had increased compared with 5 years ago, 49% said they had increased greatly and 44% said they had increased somewhat (Catalyst, 2001a). Of the women executives surveyed, 23% felt opportunities had changed greatly and 37% felt they had changed somewhat. Similar results were found among the respondents from Canada and the UK. This continues the trend of CEOs not perceiving the lack of opportunities for women in the higher ranks of leadership.

Falk and Grizard (2003) found that most male CEOs (73%) believed there was no longer a glass ceiling—a view that 71% of women did not share. As a result, most companies do not make special efforts to promote women to top positions and also do not rate their top executives on their ability to create equal employment opportunities. As long

as these practices do not change, the advancement rate of women to the executive suite will remain slow. Falk and Grizard also found many companies believed “the major barrier to the advancement of women was that qualified candidates weren’t available” (p. 9).

In the United States, affirmative action legislation was heralded as a milestone for women and minorities. The focus of affirmative action legislation has been on the recruitment of minorities and women and it has been instrumental in providing greater access to employment opportunities. However, it has not been as successful in advancing minorities and women to positions of significant leadership in business organizations. “A corporation could be in compliance with federal, state, and local guidelines while promoting a very small number of women to senior management positions” (Catalyst, 2000, p. 19). One reason for this is that there is no national reporting system to monitor the progress of women and minorities in management. Also, there has been no political will to change the status quo.

In addition to compliance with regulatory agencies, there is a solid business motivation for removing the glass ceiling. “American corporations’ very survival depends on their ability to attract the most talented human resources” (Catalyst, 2000, p. 22). Women currently represent about half of the workforce, a number expected to increase in the future. Not utilizing this pool of talent could spell obsolescence for companies trying to compete in the new global arena.

### *Demographic Influences*

According to Matz (2001), it is important to know which demographics influence the personal development of leaders. Many leaders admit to being significantly influenced by their parents (Astin & Leland, 1991; Bass, 1990; Rimm, Rimm-Kaufman, & Rimm,

1999). Interviews with 30 CEOs conducted by Piotrowski and Armstrong (1989) indicated they all had strong role models—much of the time, their mothers. For women leaders before the 1960s, it was their fathers that had the most influence on them (Astin & Leland). Rimm, Rimm-Kaufman, and Rimm found that parents played a role in the level of success that their daughters achieved in adulthood. They posited that “Parents’ high expectations were a major factor in the success of women” (p. 42). The Rimm Report suggested that parents who gave the message to “follow your dream” and who thought that their daughters should set their sights high influenced the direction and success of their daughters. High parental expectations can be confusing and create pressure for women. According to Schaef (1992), a woman “is expected to be better educated and have a better job than her mother, but she is also expected to be a wife, mother, and housekeeper” (p. 86). During in-depth interviews conducted by Gibbons (1986), successful transformational leaders described their parents as setting high educational standards and providing a lifestyle that was neither lavish nor disadvantaged. In addition, her research found that predisposition, either from inborn characteristics or early influences, played a significant role in the development of these leaders. High parental encouragement and expectations, along with high standards of achievement and a moderately high amount of early responsibility in a variety of settings, combined to differentiate these transformational leaders from transactional leaders.

The majority of leadership researchers believe that, in addition to genes and family, leaders are influenced by work experiences, hardship, opportunity, education, role models, and mentors (Conger, 1992). Matz (2001) noted that “Most leaders are from better-educated, financially secure classes” (p. 56). She went on to state that her research

showed, “that children raised in middle to high social classes were more likely to be nurtured into leadership roles or at least given the opportunity to become leaders” (p. 109). Bass (1990) posited that children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds had a wider range of experiences and opportunities from which to draw. He further noted that it has been only recently that American labor leaders have come from blue collar families. Bem (1993) stated that historically, the power holders in the United States have been rich, White, heterosexual men. Those who have remained disadvantaged in leadership roles have been women, poor people, and people of color. According to Taylor, Gilligan, and Sullivan (1995), girls in their study reported wanting a college education, a well-paying job, and, for some, a family. However, for the poor and working class this may be out of reach due to lack of encouragement, support, and opportunity. Marital status also has a demographic influence on women leaders. According to Parasuraman and Greenhaus (1993), a larger proportion of executive women (52%) than men (4%) are single, divorced, separated, or widowed. They also found that executive women are significantly more likely to be childless (61%) than executive men (3%). Many women sacrifice marriage and children to have an executive career, thinking they must choose one or the other (Matz, 2001).

### *Defining Career Success*

How do professional women define career success? According to Dr. Sylvia Rimm (Rimm & Rimm-Kaufman, 2001), success is more than a six-figure paycheck or a fancy title. It is a sense of happiness and satisfaction in what you do. Career success as defined by Awkward (2005) is “the ability of a woman to define her own career goals and to accomplish those goals on her terms” (p. 35). Awkward found that career goals usually involve career advancement and career satisfaction, which are greatly influenced by

workplace practices and expectations, which are in turn influenced by societal norms and expectations. According to Burchett (2006),

Today's work force of women watched their mothers head off to work in the morning, not something frequently witnessed by previous generations. This left young girls with the impression that this is what women do. Working women made it a natural occurrence and provided no inclination that this was outside of the norm for a woman. Women are now entering college at higher numbers than in the past and graduating with prestigious degrees. Women have a desire to use the education they worked so hard to achieve. (p. 38)

These influences impact the way a professional woman learns to achieve success, shaping her mental models and the theories she believes in. When seventeen professional women were interviewed individually and collectively about their definition of career success, Awkward (2005) discovered multiple views of success including gaining financial success and external recognition, achievement of goals, flexibility in their approach to work, having a balanced lifestyle, and experiencing internal and personal satisfaction. The participants all agreed with one of the women's observation that "Career success is a journey not a destination" (pp. 137-138).

Based on the compilation of all the participant data gathered for her research, Awkward (2005) developed this portraiture to represent her findings on how professional women view success.

I drive and manage my own career success—not anyone else. My definition of career success is highly personal and reflects my own personal life goals and challenges. I am not subjected to the expectations of others as it relates to the definition of career success or how to achieve career success. For me, career success begins with being clear about who I am and what I stand for. Career success for me is highly personal. In addition, I rely on a strong support network outside and inside of work. In the workplace, my manager's support and mentoring is critical to how I achieve career success. If it is not present, it is difficult for me to 'stay in the game.' While I work to achieve my career goals I pay close attention to my personal sense of satisfaction and fulfillment regarding my career success. I make sure that the organization gets what it needs to get from me. I am at my best when I do what comes naturally to me—when I focus on my natural talents and



abilities. If the organization acknowledges and leverages me in this way, things go well. If the organization does not, and wants me to ‘show up’ in a different way, it could lead to a less than satisfactory experience of career success. I have to be on guard for this, and manage my self within the organizational context to prevent this outcome. (pp. 164-165)

In other words, it was found that when professional women hold a mental model that career success begins as an inside job, when she knows her values and natural talents, she is better positioned to achieve career success. Furthermore, when she believes in and uses theories that include matching her talents to organizational needs, continually reevaluating this match, and making changes to her strategies as needed to maintain a good match, she increases her chances of career success.

### Leadership and Management Theories

To understand high achieving women and their road to success, it is necessary to understand something about leadership and the role it plays in organizations today. Certainly, leadership has been around for centuries but most important to this study is how it operates in modern society. This review of leadership and management theories is not meant to be exhaustive but illustrative, to bring a richer understanding of what is required of high achieving women.

According to Salas (2005), “American leadership has been very important in the development and evolution of the U.S. In general, because leadership is so important, it is a worthwhile endeavor for study” (p. 93). The newness of the concept of leadership theory, as its own field of study, is apparent since the theories began emerging in the early 1900s. Leadership theories began to evolve and change over time based on American history (Salas).

Although there are many definitions of leadership, the one this research will use is

as defined by Northouse (2004), “Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 3). This definition implies that a leader affects and is affected by followers. It emphasizes the interactivity of the event rather than traits or characteristics that reside in the leader. This definition makes leadership available to everyone. Viewing leadership in this way focuses the attention on influence as the key factor. It also focuses attention on accomplishing goals, goals that are important in some way to a group. In this process, leaders need followers and followers need leaders (Burns, 1978; Heller & Van Til, 1983; Hollander, 1992; Jago, 1982).

Leadership requires power, which is the capacity to influence. Ken Blanchard posits, “The key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority (Pockell & Avila, 2004, p. 44). “In organizations, there are two major kinds of power: *position power* and *personal power*” (Northouse, 2004, p. 6). Position power is derived from rank in an organization and personal power is derived from the followers. Since women have not attained as high a rank in most organizations as men, they are likely to rely more on their personal power to influence followers. French and Raven (1959), in their widely cited research on social power, identified five common and important types of power: reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, and expert. Each type of power is instrumental to a leader’s capacity to influence followers. Fisher (2004) illuminates another aspect of power, stating: “The mystical charm of ‘being managers’ has been drastically reduced as the fulcrum of the problem-solving has shifted to professionals, of course, without the power or authority” (p. 15).

Leadership is similar to management in many ways; both involve influencing others to accomplish goals. There are many scholars who would argue, however, that there

are several key differences (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, 2003; Kotter, 1990; Northouse, 2004; Robbins, 2003; Rost, 1991). According to Northouse (2004):

While the study of leadership can be traced back to Aristotle, management emerged around the turn of the 20th century with the advent of our industrialized society. Management was created as a way to reduce chaos in organizations and to make them run more effectively and efficiently. (p. 8)

The primary functions of management, which still hold true today, were first identified by Fayol (1916) as planning, organizing, staffing, and controlling. According to Kotter (1990), the functions of leadership and management are very different. He posited that the overriding function of leadership is to produce change and movement, while the primary function of management is to provide order and consistency to organizations. Following are the key functions of each:

- Leadership—produces change and movement
  - Establishing direction
  - Aligning people
  - Motivating and inspiring
- Management—produces order and consistency
  - Planning/budgeting
  - Organizing/staffing
  - Controlling/problem solving

According to Rost (1991), leadership is a multidirectional influence relationship and management is a unidirectional authority relationship. Leadership and management are complex processes. The following descriptions will serve to illuminate the key approaches and theories.

#### *Trait Approach or the “Great Man” Theory*

The trait approach was one of the first systematic attempts to study leadership. During the early 20th century, leadership traits were studied to determine what made certain people great leaders. The theories that were developed were called “great man” theories because they focused on the innate qualities and characteristics possessed by the great social, political, and military leaders (e.g., Mohandas Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, and Napoleon). The theory posited that people were born with these traits and only the “great” people possessed them. Research focused on identifying the specific traits that clearly differentiated leaders from followers (Bass, 1990; Jago, 1982).

Although many different sets of major leadership traits were identified by researchers, the following distilled list is common to most: intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability (Northouse, 2004). Table 1 shows the leadership traits and the researchers who identified them. There is this caution from House and Aditya (1997) who warn “Trait studies were almost entirely based on samples of adolescents, [college students], supervisors and lower level managers [who were predominately male], rather than individuals in significant positions of leadership, such as high-level managers and chief executives with overall responsibility for organizational performance” (p. 411).

The trait approach was challenged by Stogdill (1948) who after extensive analysis posited that no consistent set of traits differentiated leaders from nonleaders across a variety of situations. He noted that a person who was a leader in one situation might not be a leader in another. Leadership was reconceptualized as a working relationship between people in social situations. This marked the beginning of a research focus on leadership behaviors and situations. Most recently, researchers have shifted back to the belief that traits play a critical role in effective leadership. This is evidenced by the current emphasis

on visionary and charismatic leadership (Bass, 1990; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Nadler & Tushman, 1989; Zaleznik, 1977).

Table 1

*Studies of Leadership Traits and Characteristics*

Stogdill (1948)	Mann (1959)	Stogdill (1974)	Lord, DeVader, & Alliger (1986)	Kirkpatrick & Locke (1991)	Compilation By Northouse (2004)
Intelligence	Intelligence	Achievement	Intelligence	Drive	Intelligence
Alertness	Masculinity	Persistence	Masculinity	Motivation	Self-Confidence
Insight	Adjustment	Insight	Dominance	Integrity	Determination
Responsibility	Dominance	Initiative		Confidence	Integrity
Initiative	Extroversion	Self-Confidence		Cognitive ability	Sociability
Persistence	Conservatism	Responsibility		Task Knowledge	
Sociability		Cooperativeness			
		Tolerance			
		Influence			
		Sociability			

*Note.* “Trait studies were almost entirely based on samples of adolescents, [college students], supervisors and lower level managers [who were predominantly male], rather than individuals in significant positions of leadership, such as high-level managers and chief executives with overall responsibility for organizational performance” (House & Aditya, 1997). Adapted from “Leadership: Theory and Practice (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.),” by P.G. Northouse, 2004, p.18, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

The trait approach is consistent with the perception of leaders as gifted people with special traits and is backed by a century of research. The trait approach sets some benchmarks for what to look for in a leader. It does not, however, discuss the followers or the situations involved. Another criticism of the theory is that there is no definitive list of leadership traits (Northouse, 2004; Robbins, 2003; Stogdill, 1948).

### *Skills Approach*

The skills approach to leadership is similar to the traits approach in that it is also a leader-centered perspective on leadership. The difference is that instead of focusing on innate, fixed personality characteristics, it emphasizes skills and abilities that can be learned. This makes it a leadership theory that can be taught, thereby opening leadership opportunities to more people, not just a gifted few. First published in the *Harvard Business Review* in 1955 by Katz, the skills approach saw renewed interest in the 1990s when Mumford and his colleagues advanced a comprehensive skills-based model of leadership (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Owen Jacobs, & Fleishman, 2000; Yammarino, 2000). Katz (1955) discerned that:

For years many people have contended that leadership ability is inherent in certain chosen individuals. We talk of “born leaders,” “born executives,” “born salesmen.” It is undoubtedly true that certain people, naturally or innately, possess greater aptitude or ability in certain skills. But research in psychology and physiology would also indicate, first, that those having strong aptitudes and abilities can improve their skill through practice and training, and secondly, that even those lacking the natural ability can improve their performance and effectiveness. (p. 40)

Katz (1955) observed executives in the workplace and posited that effective leadership depends on three basic personal skills: technical, human, and conceptual. Katz argued that these skills are different from traits because skills imply what the leader can accomplish whereas traits imply who the leader is (innate characteristics). Skills are

defined as the ability to use one's knowledge to accomplish a set of goals. While all three skills are important for leaders, the importance of each skill varies at different management levels. For example, at lower management levels, technical and human skills are most important. Middle managers need competence in all three skills. In upper management, conceptual and human skills are most important, while technical skills become less important. Katz found that leaders are more effective when there is a match between their skills and their management level.

Building on the work of Katz (1955), Mumford et al. (2000) expanded the skills approach into a comprehensive model comprised of five different components: competencies, individual attributes, leadership outcomes, career experiences, and environmental influences.

To summarize how the model works, a leader possesses the individual attributes of (a) general cognitive ability which equates to intelligence, and (b) crystallized cognitive ability which refers to intellectual ability that is learned over time. These individual attributes combine with the leader's competencies to produce effective outcomes. Both career experience and environmental influences (outside the leader's control) help influence the outcomes.

According to Mumford et al. (2000), the skills approach is distinguishable from the behavioral models (e.g., the style approach, transformational leadership, or leader-member exchange) which focus on what leaders do, because it frames leadership as the capabilities (knowledge and skills) that make effective leadership possible. Since the model has been tested on military personnel only, the model may be weak in general application. The model is also weak in predictive value. Although this model claims not to be a traits

approach, individual traits such as cognitive abilities, motivation, and personality do play a significant role in the model.

### *Style Approach or Behavioral Theory*

The style approach emphasizes the behavior of the leader, what they do and how they act, rather than whom they are. This approach is made up of two kinds of behaviors: task and relationship. Task behaviors facilitate goal accomplishment and relationship behaviors help subordinates feel comfortable with themselves, with each other, and with the situation. The overarching concept of the style approach is to explain how leaders combine task and relational behaviors to influence subordinates in their efforts to reach their goals (Northouse, 2004). Numerous studies have been conducted over the years to investigate this approach. Among the most prominent research studies were those undertaken at Ohio State, the University of Michigan, and the University of Texas.

#### *The Ohio State Studies*

In the late 1940s, many researchers investigated the style approach. Some of the first studies were conducted at Ohio State University. Based on Stogdill's work (1948) advocating the importance of investigating more than leaders' traits, researchers analyzed how individuals acted when they were leading a group. Researchers Hemphill and Coons (1957) developed the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) and gave it to hundreds of individuals in educational, military, and industrial settings. The results showed that certain behaviors were typical of leaders. In 1963, Stogdill published a shortened version of the questionnaire called the LBDQ-XII.

Researchers found two general types of leader behaviors: *initiating structure* (task behaviors such as organizing work, structuring the work context, defining role



responsibilities, and scheduling work activities) and *consideration* (relationship behaviors such as building camaraderie, respect, trust, and liking between leaders and followers; Stogdill, 1974). The task and relationship behaviors were considered to be distinct and independent, as on two different continua. Determining how a leader optimally mixes task and relationship behaviors depending on the situation has been the central task for researchers (Northouse, 2004).

#### *The University of Michigan Studies*

At the same time as the Ohio State Studies, researchers at the University of Michigan were investigating the impact of leaders' behaviors on the performance of small groups (Cartwright & Zander, 1960; Katz & Kahn, 1951; Likert, 1961, 1967). The research identified two types of leadership behaviors which they called *production orientation* and *employee orientation*. These constructs paralleled the task and relationship behaviors identified in the Ohio State Studies.

During the 1950s and 1960s, there were many research studies conducted at both Ohio State and the University of Michigan to determine how leaders could best combine their task and relationship behaviors to maximize the impact on their followers' satisfaction and performance. Although the preponderance of the research was inconclusive (Yukl, 1994), results pointed to the value of a leader being both high task and high relationship oriented in all situations (Misumi, 1985). Robbins (2003) explained further that "Employee-oriented leaders were associated with higher group productivity and higher job satisfaction. Production-oriented leaders tended to be associated with low group productivity and lower job satisfaction" (p. 317).

#### *The University of Texas Studies*

The most well-known model of managerial behavior is the Managerial Grid developed by Blake and Mouton in the 1960s at the University of Texas. The grid has since been revised many times and renamed the Leadership Grid (Blake & McCauley, 1991; Blake & Mouton, 1964, 1978, 1985). The purpose of the grid was to explain how leaders help organizations to reach their purposes through two factors: *concern for production* and *concern for people*. These two constructs parallel the task and relationship behaviors of the previously mentioned studies. By plotting a leader's behaviors on the grid, one can ascertain the type of leadership/management style the leader is using.

The style approach marked a major shift in the general focus of leadership research. Previously, researchers treated leadership as a personality trait. The style approach included the behaviors of leaders and what they did in various situations. The style approach has been widely validated by research (Blake & McCauley, 1991; Blake & Mouton, 1964, 1978, 1985). Using the Leadership Grid, leaders can assess their actions and determine how to improve their style. One drawback of the style approach is that it has not adequately shown how leaders' styles are associated with performance outcomes (Robbins, 2003; Yukl, 1994). The style approach does provide a valuable framework for assessing leadership and reminds leaders that their impact on others occurs along both task and relational dimensions.

### *Situational Approach*

"Predicting leadership success is more complex than isolating a few traits or preferable behaviors" (Robbins, 2003, p. 319). Badaracco, Berkley, & Farkas, (1998) concur stating, "We disagree, both that leadership is a generic trait and that a person's approach to leadership is solely a function of personality. In fact, we found that personality

is just one element of effective leadership and often not the decisive one” (p. 144). In the late 1960s, researchers began to investigate situational factors and how they influenced leadership.

One of the most widely recognized approaches to leadership is Hershey and Blanchard’s (1969) situational leadership theory. Developed in 1969 based on Reddin’s (1979) 3-D management style theory, the approach was refined and revised several times (Blanchard, Zigarmi, & Nelson, 1993; Blanchard, Zigarmi, & Zigarmi, 1985; Hershey & Blanchard, 1977, 1988). Based on the premise that different situations require different styles of leadership, this model posits that to be effective, a leader must adapt his or her approach to each situation, taking into consideration how competent his or her employees are to perform the tasks needed for that situation. Leaders must change the degree to which they are directive or supportive (which aligns with task and relationship behaviors discussed earlier) depending on employees’ ever changing skills and motivations.

Using the situational leadership model, the leader would assess the development level of the employees involved, and then match his leadership style to the employees’ needs. For example, a new employee who is just learning his job would require a leadership behavior termed *directing* style. As the employee gained more skills, the leader could move to more of a *coaching* style of leadership. Employees who are very developed would require a leader to *delegate* most tasks.

The situational approach is easy to understand, practical, and applicable to a wide variety of settings and situations. It has been used extensively in organizational leadership training and development. While many other leadership theories are descriptive, situational leadership is prescriptive and guides the leader as to what style to use as employees

progress along a continuum of skill development. A key value of this approach to leadership is that it reminds leaders to treat each employee differently based on the task at hand and the employee's skills level. It reminds leaders to seek opportunities to help subordinates learn new skills and become confident in their work (Fernandez & Vecchio, 1997; Yukl, 1998).

Critics of the situational approach question the lack of research published on it, calling into question the validity of the approach (Fernandez & Vecchio, 1997; Graeff, 1997; Vecchio & Boatwright, 2002). Some also cite the ambiguity in defining the levels of followers (Graeff, 1997; Yukl, 1989). This model of situational leadership also fails to account for such demographics as age, education, experience, and gender (Vecchio & Boatwright). Another question posed of this model is "Does it work for groups as well as individuals?" Carew, Parisi-Carew, and Blanchard (1990) posited that groups go through developmental stages which are similar to individuals and stated leaders should match their styles to the group's overall level of development.

### *Contingency Theory*

The most popular contingency theory was developed by Fiedler (1964, 1967; Fiedler & Garcia, 1987). It is a *leader-match* theory which means it matches leaders to the appropriate situation (Fiedler & Chemers, 1974). The theory was called *contingency* because it posited that a leader's effectiveness depended on how well the leaders' style fit the context of the situation. Within the framework of the contingency model, leadership styles are still based on task or relationship behaviors, as seen in other models. To determine which style a leader has, Fiedler developed the Least Preferred Coworker (LPC) scale. Leaders scoring high on this scale are said to be relationship motivated. Those

scoring low are task oriented. In addition to the motivation of the leader, the situational variables must be assessed by looking at three factors: leader-member relations, task structure, and position power. These variables determine which style of leadership has the best chance of being effective in the given situation.

Contingency theory is backed by a considerable amount of research, is predictive of leadership effectiveness, and was the first leadership theory to emphasize the impact of situations on leaders. It allows leaders to not be effective in all situations (Peters, Hartke, & Pohlman, 1985; Strube & Garcia, 1981). Critics of the theory state that the link between styles and situations are not adequately explained and the LPC scale has questionable validity and workability (Fiedler, 1993; Fiedler & Garcia, 1987). Although the theory does not fully explain how organizations can use the results for situational engineering, contingency theory has made a substantial contribution to the understanding of the leadership process (Northouse, 2004).

#### *Path-Goal Theory*

The path-goal theory was developed in the early 1970s to explain how leaders enhance employee performance and employee satisfaction by focusing on employee motivation (Evans, 1970; House, 1971; House & Dessler, 1974; House & Mitchell, 1974). This is a type of contingency approach because the outcome depends on the fit between the leader's behavior and the characteristics of the employees and the task. The leader behaviors examined in this theory are directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented (House & Mitchell). The employees' characteristics include their need for affiliation, preferences for structure, desires for control, and level of task ability. Task characteristics include the design of the task, the authority system of the organization,

and the work group. For example, according to House and Mitchell, the path-goal approach predicts that a directive style of leadership is best in situations in which the subordinates are authoritarian, the task is ambiguous, and the organizational rules and procedures are unclear. In these situations, directive leadership complements the work by providing guidance and structure for subordinates.

The path-goal theory was one of the first explanations of how task and employee characteristics affect the impact of leadership on employee performance and satisfaction (Jermier, 1996). No other leadership theory integrates the motivation principles of expectancy theory into leadership theory. Critics believe the path-goal theory involves so many variables that it is hard to use in an organizational setting. In addition, research does not fully support the claims of the theory (Evans, 1996; House & Mitchell, 1974; Indvik, 1986; Jermier; Schriesheim & Kerr, 1977; Schriesheim & Neider, 1996; Schriesheim & Schriesheim, 1980; Stinson & Johnson, 1975; Wofford & Liska, 1993). Lastly, the path-goal theory is leader centric and does not promote employee involvement in the leadership process.

#### *Leader-Member Exchange Theory*

The focus of the leader-member exchange (LMX) theory is the relationship between leaders and followers. The LMX theory was first developed by Dansereau, Graen, and Haga (1975), Graen and Cashman (1975), and Graen (1976). Prior to this theory, researchers assumed that leaders treated followers as a group. Leader-member dyads based on expanded relationships were called the *in-group*. Leader-member dyads based on formal job descriptions were called the *out-group*. Employees who maintain only formal hierarchical relationships with their leader become out-group members and receive only

standard job benefits. Members of the in-group receive extra influence, opportunities, and rewards. Researchers found that high-quality interactions between leaders and followers produced positive outcomes for the organization, such as less employee turnover, greater organizational commitment, and more promotions. Followers reported feeling better, accomplishing more, and helping the organization prosper.

The leader-member exchange theory focuses on the leader-member relationship and explains how leaders use some employees (in-group members) more than others (out-group members) to accomplish organizational tasks (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The LMX theory is supported by multitudes of research (Schriesheim, Castro, & Cogliser, 1999). Critics point out that the LMX theory goes against principles of fairness and justice in the workplace (Scandura, 1999) and that the perceived inequalities created by favoring the in-group can have a devastating effect on the feelings and behavior of out-group members (McClane, 1991). In addition, while the model advocates promoting trust, respect, and commitment in relationships with employees, it does not explain how leaders should create high-quality exchanges (Yukl, 1994).

#### *Leader-Participation Model*

Vroom and Yetton (1973) developed the leader-participation model which related leadership behavior and participation in decision making. The model was normative, following a sequential set of rules to be used in determining the amount of participation in decision making, depending on situational variables. The model was a decision tree incorporating seven contingencies and five leadership styles. Vroom collaborated with Jago (1988, 1995) to revise the model which now includes 12 contingency variables. Research has supported the model (Ettling & Jago, 1988; Field, 1982; Field & House,

1990; Leana, 1987). Critics of the model contend that variables have been omitted and the model is too complex to be used on an everyday basis by a busy manager (House & Aditya, 1997).

### *Transactional Leadership*

According to Burns (1978), transactional leadership focuses on the exchanges that occur between leaders and their followers. This is the type of leadership referred to in most leadership models. An example of transactional leadership would be an executive gaining the support of his or her employees because of promising employees a raise when a special project is completed. This exchange dimension or transaction is common at all levels of organizations, in all types of industries. In transactional leadership, the leader does not individualize the needs of subordinates nor attend to their personal development (Kuhnert, 1994).

Transactional leaders offer rewards they feel will be valued by followers and make them contingent on accomplishing what the leader feels needs to be done. Transactional leaders use a process known as *management by exception* which refers to using corrective criticism, negative feedback, and negative reinforcement to address employee mistakes. Laissez-faire is another way that transactional leaders address employee behavior. *Laissez-faire* is the absence of leadership or a “hands-off” approach. Leaders using this approach abdicate responsibility by delaying decisions, giving no feedback, and making little effort to help followers satisfy their needs (Northouse, 2004).

### *Transformational Leadership*

In contrast to transactional leadership, transformational leadership is a process where an individual engages with others to create a connection that raises the level of



motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower. A transformational leader tries to help followers reach their fullest potential (Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1990). This process involves assessing followers' motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them respectfully. Transformational leadership involves a special form of influence that motivates followers to accomplish more than what is usually expected of them. This transformational process often includes charismatic and visionary leadership. A classic example of transformational leadership would be Mohandas Gandhi who raised the hopes and demands of millions of his people and in the process was changed himself (Burns, 1978).

Transformational leadership was first coined by Downton (1973); however, the seminal work on this theory was done by James MacGregor Burns (1978). Burns linked the roles of leadership and followership, stating leaders tap into the motives of followers to accomplish the goals of both the leaders and followers. Burns made the distinction that leadership was different from wielding power because it integrates the followers' needs. A study by Lowe and Gardner (2000) found that one third of the research on leadership published in *Leadership Quarterly* was about transformational leadership.

Bass (1985) expanded and refined Burns' work on transformational leadership by giving more attention to followers' needs rather than those of leaders. Bass posited that transformational leadership could apply to negative outcomes and described transactional and transformational leadership as a single continuum (Yammarino, 1993). According to transformational theory, followers are motivated to do more than expected because transformational leaders raise the followers' level of consciousness about the importance of goals, get followers to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the organization,

and move followers to higher level needs (Bass; Bass & Avolio, 1990; Howell & Avolio, 1992; Kuhnert, 1994; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). Lowe, Kroeck, and Sivasubramaniam (1996) conducted a meta-analysis of 39 leadership studies and found that transactional leadership resulted in expected outcomes, while transformational leadership resulted in performance that far exceeded expectations. In addition, they found that individuals who demonstrated transformational leadership were perceived as more effective leaders with better outcomes than were individuals who demonstrated transactional leadership.

Bennis and Nanus (1985, 2003) interviewed 90 chief executive officers (CEOs) and identified four strategies used by transformational leaders: develop a clear vision of the future which emanated from both the leader and the followers, mobilize people to accept a new organizational identity, create trust, and portray self-regard through fusing a sense of self into their work, thereby creating feelings of confidence and high expectations in followers. The study also found that transformational leaders were committed to learning and emphasized this in their organizations.

Tichy and DeVanna (1986, 1990) also studied transformational leadership by interviewing 12 CEOs and identifying how they managed change. Tichy and DeVanna found that leaders manage change in a three-step process. In the first stage, transformational leaders, as change agents, recognize the need for change and communicate the implications to the organization. In the second stage, they create a vision consisting of the viewpoints of everyone in the organization. Lastly, transformational leaders institutionalize changes, involving followers to implement new ideas to break down old structures.

According to Yukl (1999), there is substantial evidence that transformational leadership is an effective form of leadership in a variety of situations. Transformational leadership has been positively related to follower satisfaction, motivation, and performance. Critics of the theory point out that transformational factors are not unique to this theory and correlate with each other, making the factors non distinct (Tejeda, Scandura, & Pillai, 2001). Some researchers have called transformational leadership elitist and antidemocratic (Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1993), dubbing it “heroic leadership” because it stresses a leader who moves the followers to do exceptional things (Yukl). The charismatic nature of transformational leadership presents significant risk of abuse because it can be used for destructive purposes (Conger, 1999; Howell & Avolio, 1992). There is a burden on individuals and organizations to monitor how they are being influenced.

### *Charismatic Leadership*

The theory of charismatic leadership was developed by House (1976) who posited that charismatic leaders act in ways that have specific charismatic effects on their followers. Yammarino (1993) suggested that charisma is a necessary but by itself, not a sufficient condition for transformational leadership. House described the personal characteristics of charismatic leaders as being dominant, having a strong desire to influence others, being self-confident, and having strong moral values. Leaders display specific behaviors such as acting as role models for the beliefs and values they want their followers to adopt, appearing competent to followers, articulating goals that have moral overtones, communicating high expectations for followers, exhibiting confidence in followers’ abilities, and stimulating motives in followers that may include affiliation, power, or esteem. According to House, the effects of charismatic leadership include follower trust in

the leader's ideology, similarity between the beliefs of the leader and the followers, unquestioning acceptance of the leader, expression of warmth toward the leader, follower obedience, identification with the leader, emotional involvement in the leader's goals, heightened goals for followers, and follower confidence in achieving their goals (Avolio & Gibbons, 1988; House).

House's theory of charismatic leadership has been revised and extended to link the identity of the followers to the collective identity of the organization so that followers will view work as an expression of themselves (Conger, 1999; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). "Charismatic leadership works because it ties followers and their self-concepts to the organizational identity" (Northouse, 2004, p. 173).

#### *Visionary Leadership*

Visionary leadership goes beyond charisma. According to Robbins (2003), visionary leadership is "the ability to create and articulate a realistic, credible, attractive vision of the future for an organization or organizational unit that grows out of and improves upon the present" (p. 344). Bennis and Nanus (2003) advocate involving others in the visioning process which allows participants to "share their values and dreams, brings a broader range of viewpoints and expertise into the search for a new direction, and makes it easier to gain commitment to the vision at the end of the process" (p. 98). If properly selected and implemented, the vision is so energizing that it "in effect jump-starts the future by calling forth the skills, talents, and resources to make it happen" (Nanus, 1992, p. 8).

Visionary leaders exhibit three qualities that are related to their effectiveness. First, visionary leaders clearly articulate the vision in terms of required actions and aims through

both oral and written communication. Second, visionary leaders express the vision through their behavior, in ways that continually reinforce the vision. Third, visionary leaders extend the vision to other leadership contexts, sequencing activities so that the vision can be applied to a variety of situations. For example, the vision has to be as meaningful to the employees in marketing as it is to those in manufacturing and to employees in Los Angeles as well as in Paris (Robbins, 2003).

According to Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002), a visionary leader needs a strong undergirding of emotional intelligence to support the inspirational component of the visionary style. Their findings led them to conclude that the visionary style works well in many business situations because of its positive impact. They found that visionary leadership is “particularly effective when a business is adrift—during a turnaround or when it is in dire need of a fresh vision” (Goleman et al., 2002, p. 59). Goleman et al. found the visionary style came naturally to transformational leaders seeking to radically change their organization. Goleman et al. caution that the visionary style does not work in every situation, especially when a leader is working with a team of experts who are more experienced. In this instance, a visionary style may appear pompous or out of step with the agenda at hand. In addition, a visionary leader must guard against appearing overbearing which would undermine the egalitarian spirit of team-based management.

### *Servant Leadership*

Robert K. Greenleaf ushered in a new paradigm of leadership in 1977 with his work on servant leadership. Greenleaf posited that service should be the distinguishing characteristic of leadership and that in doing so, leaders become followers. A servant leader constantly inquires whether other people’s highest priority needs are being served.

In this way, servant leaders are seekers who are always open to new ideas and ready for change. Greenleaf found that true leadership is an inner quality as well as an exercise of authority. According to Spears (2004), these characteristics are central to the development of servant-leaders: (a) listening, (b) empathy, (c) healing, (d) awareness, (e) persuasion, (f) conceptualization, (g) foresight, (h) stewardship, (i) commitment to the growth of people, and (j) building community.

Greenleaf (2002) observed that many people in organizations were questioning the status quo and looking for a more balanced society where people related to one another in less coercive and more creatively supportive ways. Greenleaf theorized:

A new moral principle is emerging, which holds that the only authority deserving one's allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the led to the leader in response to, and in proportion to, the clearly evident servant stature of the leader. Those who choose to follow this principle will not casually accept the authority of existing institutions. *Rather, they will freely respond only to individuals who are chosen as leaders because they are proven and trusted as servants.* To the extent that this principle prevails in the future, the only viable institutions will be those that are predominately servant led. (pp. 23-24)

Greenleaf believed this would be “a major society-shaping force” (p. 24). He stated that “Businesses are asked not only to produce better goods and services, but to become greater social assets as institutions” (p. 147). Greenleaf posited that “Business exists as much to provide meaningful work to the person as it exists to provide a product or service to the customer. The business then becomes a serving institution—serving those who produce and those who use” (p. 155).

Fisher (2004) posited that the ability to serve is a key factor of leadership. He concurs with Greenleaf on the idea that leaders must be followers, stating that:

They must have the best interest of those they serve in mind, and know them as they know themselves—how they think, feel, believe and behave; what they value, why they value it, and what are their greatest hopes and fears. Otherwise, their ability to

serve is a charade. (p. 16)

Spears (1995) observed that traditional models of leadership are yielding to a newer model—that of servant leadership—a model that attempts to simultaneously enhance the personal growth of workers and improve the quality and caring of our institutions.

Nuttall (2004) concluded that theories of leadership and management dynamics operate as an ontological framework that describes the interactions of people as they work together. He cautioned it is important to remember that these relational modalities are not stages in a developmental process but overlapping states; although it is unusual for two or more to be operating at the same time. Smith, Montagno, and Kuzmenko (2004) compared transformational and servant leadership theories and concluded that the servant leadership model would be most effective in nonprofit, volunteer, and religious organizations which operate in a more static environment and attract employees who seek personal growth, nurturing and healing. Smith et al. found transformational leadership more suitable for a dynamic business environment where employees are empowered with greater responsibility and encouraged to innovate, take initiative, and risk. Smith et al. also cautioned that an organization's life cycle plays a role in determining the most effective leadership model.

### *Gender and Leadership*

Salas (2005) found that most of the literature pertaining to leadership has been written from a White male's perspective, which is logical because corporate America was founded by White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant male *captains of industry*. In 1920, a rare glimpse of women as leaders can be found in this commentary by Bogardus:

The appearance of special ability is not confined to one sex. Historically, woman did not have opportunity to translate her latent talent into achievement, and hence it

is not known how much ability woman possesses. In recent decades, however in our country, woman has been forging ahead rapidly and availing herself of increasing opportunities—a tendency which presages a greatly augmented degree of leadership on her part. In competing with men in nearly all lines of human endeavor she is demonstrating her versatile abilities. (p. 193)

While women have made significant progress in demonstrating their abilities and attaining leadership positions, the number of women remains far below their proportions in the labor force. In addition to demonstrating a strong achievement record, research has shown that women leaders exhibit a number of personal qualities conducive to executive positions (Kelly & Dabul Marin, 1998).

In a study of successful women CEOs, executives, and managers, Jordan (2006) concluded that these women possess significant attributes which include a strong work ethic, moral conduct, enthusiasm for teamwork, and physical characteristics such as height and size. The study also established that the higher a woman rose in an organization, the more she described possessing masculine traits. In this study, the middle managers described having the most feminine qualities which suggests women incorporate masculine traits to become successful but do not acknowledge them until they reach the CEO level. The study noted that the portrayal of strong women in the media depicts women as aggressive, sexual, competitive, and combative. This study found the media's portrayal to be an exaggeration of the way the women saw themselves. Women in this study described themselves as direct, forthright, decisive, assertive, communicative, independent, and self-reliant. The women scored themselves low in having very feminine traits such as being perceived as soft-spoken, yielding, or gentle. Research by Kossek (1998) concurred with that of Jordan, finding successful business women “are less likely to show their feminine behaviors” (p. 3).



Jordan's (2006) research concluded that "Successful leaders possess qualities that are found in both men and women. Women who incorporate masculine traits add to their leadership talent. Men who are able to incorporate relational strengths add immeasurably to their abilities" (p. 49). Jordan posited that "a blending of styles is occurring today and is beneficial to leaders" (p. 48).

In a study by Gardiner and Tiggemann (1999) empirical tests conducted on 60 men and 60 women managers found that when men dominate numerically in an industry, women in that industry experience pressure to alter their leadership style, which in turn impacts on their mental health. The researchers found the pressure on women to conform to a masculine style of leadership was stress producing and was a significant reason that more women were not found in the upper echelons of corporate management. The American Psychological Association concluded that "sex stereotypes place women into a double bind situation. If they adopt stereotypically masculine styles of leadership that may be required for that particular job, they are considered to be abrasive or maladjusted. However, if women utilize stereotypically feminine styles, they are considered less capable and their performance may not be attributed to competence" (as cited in Gardiner and Tiggemann, p. 304). Research by Kirchmeyer (2002) concurs, adding that high-ranking executives are more likely to reward those with whom they feel comfortable and share similar values. Despite the current trend of valuing feminine work styles, employees who exhibit typically masculine traits (e.g., independence, assertiveness, and willingness to take a stand) are more often selected for promotions and raises.

The resource-based theory of competitive advantage and strategy analysis (Barney, 1997) suggests that organizations could increase their competitive advantage by

optimizing the underutilized intellectual and social capital of women with leadership potential. In most businesses today, women and people of color are major sources of untapped value that can add to an organization's creativity, change efforts, teamwork, and financial performance (Appold, Siengthai, & Kasarda, 1998; Flynn, 1994; Sharapov & Adamson, 2006; Shrader, Blackburn, & Iles, 1997; Thompson, 1999). Hiring, developing, and promoting women into leadership positions can be one of the most beneficial strategies an organization can adopt to compete in today's global marketplace (Catalyst, 2004a; Indvik, 2004). Catalyst (2004a) examined 4 years of data from 353 of the Fortune 500 companies and found that companies with the highest representation of women on their top management teams experienced better financial performance than companies with the lowest representation of women. The study analyzed both Return on Equity (ROE), which was 35.1% higher, and Total Return to Shareholders (TRS), which was 34.0% higher. For hiring, developing, and promoting women into leadership positions to succeed, organizations must raise gender consciousness throughout the workplace (Catalyst, 2001b; Indvik).

### *Differences Between Men and Women Leaders*

Is there a difference between the leadership and management styles of men and women? A meta-analysis of 82 studies measuring leader effectiveness found no difference between male and female leaders (Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995). Research also found that there is no difference between men and women in leader aptitude, in motivation to be a leader, in job satisfaction, in commitment, and in subordinate satisfaction (Dobbins & Platz, 1986; Donnell & Hall, 1980; Powell, 1993).

Meta-analyses and literature reviews conducted on over 160 studies found only one

difference. Women used a more participative or democratic style and a less autocratic or directive style than men. This tendency declined in a highly male-dominated setting. The studies also found that both men and women emphasized task accomplishment when the setting was numerically dominated by leaders of their own sex or when the leadership role was congruent with their gender (Eagly & Johnson, 1990).

In her classic article for the *Harvard Business Review* entitled *Ways Women Lead*, Rosener (1990) described her study of successful male and female business leaders and concluded that in the earlier years of growth in women's leadership, there was probably no difference between men and women. The men in the study were more likely than the women to describe themselves in ways that characterize what management experts call *transactional leadership*—viewing job performance as a series of transactions with subordinates and exchanging rewards for services rendered or punishment for inadequate performance. The pioneering female executives adhered to many rules of conduct that spelled success for men because they were breaking ground.

Women today are making their way to top management, not by adopting the style and habits that have proven successful for men, but by drawing on the skills and attitudes they have developed from their shared experience as women. The women respondents in Rosener's (1990) study described themselves as using *transformational leadership*—getting subordinates to transform their own self-interest into the interest of the group through concern for a broader goal. Moreover, they ascribed their power to personal characteristics like charisma, interpersonal skills, hard work, or personal contacts rather than to organizational structure.

The difference in styles centers on power of influence rather than power of position.

Research supports that men previously relied on the power that came from their organizational position and authority. Employee performance was driven by rewards and punishments determined by management. Women today share power and information with employees and strive to influence employee performance and commitment through esteem-building and the energy that develops when employees feel valuable to the team (Rosener, 1990). These findings were confirmed by recent research conducted on leaders from business, academia, and government (Matz, 2001).

In *The Female Advantage*, Helgesen (1995) contrasted the styles of 50 women executives and business owners with the findings of a similar study published in the classic, *The Nature of Managerial Work*, by Henry Mintzberg (1980). Her study found that male executives typically saw themselves in a hierarchy reaching down to employees, while female executives saw themselves in the center of a web reaching out (Helgesen). Peters (2005) found that “Leaders weave dense webs of inclusion at all levels. Losers are slaves to hierarchy and rank and formal communication processes” (p. 42). Research indicates women’s social skills are more developed than men’s and highlights the fact that women’s preferred style of cooperative or “web leadership” is a good fit for the evolving global marketplace (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1997; Fisher, 1998; Peters; Petrick, Scherer, Brodzinski, Quinn, & Ainina, 1999; Sharpe, 2000).

The business environment is recognizing the value of employee commitment and empowerment in the success of a business. Godfrey (1992) posited that a more effective method of accomplishing goals is to use relationships in a collaborative approach. While both men and women are striving to learn and practice this style of management, Godfrey suggested that women have an advantage in skills like collaboration, cooperation and

team-building.

Morrison (2000) argued the counterpoint in the discussion of gender differences in management and leadership. In *Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Can Women Reach the Top of America's Largest Corporations*, she contended that differences have less to do with gender than environment. If there is a difference, it is because more women have had to work their way through the ranks of a business, thereby learning effective strategies to get things done.

A study by the National Foundation for Women Business Owners (NFWBO; 1994) sampled a population of men and women across the country and found differences between women and men business owners. Among the findings were:

1. More than half of the women business owners emphasized intuitive or “right-brain” thinking. This style stresses creativity, sensitivity and values-based decision making. Seventy one percent of the men business owners emphasized logical or “left-brain” thinking. This style stresses analysis, processing information methodically and developing procedures.
2. The women business owners’ decision-making style was more “whole-brained” than their male counterparts, that is, more evenly distributed between right and left brain thinking.
3. Two-thirds of the women business owners compared to men business owners tended to reflect on decisions, weighing options and outcomes before moving to action. In addition, women were more likely to gather information from business advisors and associates.
4. Women entrepreneurs described their businesses in family terms and saw their

business relationships as a network. Men entrepreneurs thought in hierarchical terms and focused more on establishing clear rules and procedures.

5. The women saw men as better able to delegate. The men admired that women were more perceptive and caring in their business relationships and better able to balance different tasks and priorities.
6. Both the women and men entrepreneurs agreed there was more to success than monetary gain. However, the women derived satisfaction and success from building relationships with customers and employees, having control of their own destiny, and doing something they considered worthwhile. The men entrepreneurs described success in terms of gaining self-satisfaction for a job well done and achieving desired goals.

These differences are consistent with research on sex differences related to worldview, socialization, and life experience that may result in differing mental models or implicit theories of leadership (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Lowe & Gardner, 2000; Tannen, 1994).

In a meta-analysis conducted by Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky (1992), the researchers concluded that male and female leaders are sometimes evaluated differently, which can impact job assignments (Ohlott, Ruderman, & McCauley, 1994), promotions, training (Tharenou, Latimer, & Conroy, 1994), and mentoring (Dreher & Cox, 1996). Specifically, male and female leaders were evaluated equally favorably when they used a democratic leadership style (a stereotypically feminine style). However, female leaders were evaluated unfavorably when they used an autocratic or directive style of leadership (a typically masculine style). In addition, women were especially devalued when they worked

in a male-dominated setting and when the evaluators were men. Women raters did not favor one sex over the other. This finding supports other recent studies that suggest male and female leaders differ in the lengths to which they must go to be promoted, in the need to adapt their behavior at work, in the amount of support they receive at work, and in the impact of variables on career advancement (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Ohlott et al; Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998; Tharenou, 2001; Tharenou et al.).

Eagly, Karau, and Makhijani (1995) suggested that the workplace conditions which provide a good fit for the typical male or female leadership styles are based on the social role theory of sex differences in social behavior. This theory states that people are expected to behave in congruence with their culturally defined gender roles (Eagly, 1987). Although overall effectiveness has not been shown to differ between men and women leaders, men's effectiveness was more highly regarded over women's when the following conditions were present: (a) when the setting was male-dominated, (b) when a high percentage of subordinates were male, and (c) when the role was seen as needing self-assessed competence, interest, and low requirements for cooperation with high requirements for control. Effectiveness comparisons favored women to the degree these conditions were reversed. In another key finding, effectiveness comparisons favored women leaders for middle management positions, while they favored male leaders in entry level or supervisory positions.

In a study conducted on over 6,000 bosses, peers, and subordinates, Micco (1996) found that women outperformed men in 28 of the 31 areas examined. While both men and women scored equally on delegating authority, men scored higher on handling pressure and coping with frustration. Women outscored men on areas including conflict resolution,

work quality, adaptation to change, productivity, idea generation, and motivation of others. In another study conducted on 3,000 managers, no differences were found between men and women on 30 attributes measured. Results indicated that women emphasized planning, organizing work, and using an empathetic approach more than men, while deemphasizing the need to win at all costs (“Women May”, 1997). Another study conducted on 1,000 managers’ bosses and employees who were asked to evaluate the bosses’ performance, found no significant differences between men and women in some performance categories. However, in 20 categories showing a statistically significant difference, women received much higher scores in areas such as planning and decisiveness (Gendron, 1995).

Gender differences in communication and activity styles have been noted by Peters and Barletta (2005). Peters and Barletta quote Judith Rosener speaking on women managers as America’s competitive secret as saying:

Women speak and hear a language of connection and intimacy, and men speak and hear a language of status and independence. Men communicate to obtain information, establish their status, and show independence. Women communicate to create relationships, encourage interaction, and exchange feelings. (p. 63)

Peters and Barletta also note the findings of the editorial director of Redwood Publications in the UK who explained that men need information in tables, comparisons, and rankings. Women, on the other hand, want narratives that cohere. In addition, Peters and Barletta have found that women seek understanding, men seek solutions. Women get personal while men stay detached. Women see more details and prefer to tackle many things at once. Men prefer to process information at the headline level and work on one thing at a time. According to Helen Fisher (as cited in Peters, 2005), the natural talents of women are changing the world. She posited:

On average, women and men possess a number of different innate skills. And



current trends suggest that many sectors of the twenty-first-century economic community are going to need the natural talents of women...Women have many exceptional faculties bred in deep history: a talent with words; a capacity to read nonverbal cues; emotional sensitivity; empathy; patience; an ability to do and think several things simultaneously;...a penchant for long-term planning; a gift for networking and negotiating; and a preference for cooperating, reaching consensus, and leading via egalitarian teams. (p. 99)

Judith Rosener's research findings echo these traits and she added, "No other country in the world has a comparable supply of professional women waiting to be called into action. *This* is America's competitive secret" (as cited in Peters, p. 99).

In a research study conducted by Catalyst (2004c) of over 900 senior executive men and women from Fortune 1,000 companies it was found that "Men and women equally aspire to be CEO. In addition, women who have children living with them are just as likely to want the corner office as women without children at home" (p. 2).

### *Generational Differences in the Workplace*

In addition to differences between men's and women's leadership and management styles, generational differences in the workplace can create challenges that must be overcome to effectively work together, network, mentor, and succeed. According to Lancaster and Stillman (2003), four generations at work means four distinct mindsets that collide every day, for better or worse. Understanding what makes each generation tick can help bridge the generational divide (amongst Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation Xers and Millennials) to create stronger bonds, increase professionalism, and, ultimately, serve stakeholders better.

The Traditionalists, born between 1900 and 1945, learned early on that they could achieve by putting aside the needs of the individual and working toward the greater good of the institution. They are hard working, conservative, and patriotic, with great faith in

American institutions. The organizational style for Traditionalists was modeled by the military, a command-and-control environment in which information trickles down from the top. If there were a single word to describe traditionalists, it would be loyal.

Traditionalists believe in evolution, not revolution. According to Lancaster and Stillman (2003), the key to working well with Traditionalists is to respect their legacies and tap into their abilities to mentor.

The Baby Boomers were born between 1946 and 1964 and are the offspring of Traditionalist parents. Traditionalist parents encouraged their Boomer offspring to believe they could change the world. Boomers question authority, like to put their own stamp on things, and believe institutions can be changed. Boomers are highly competitive and want rewards that show they are getting ahead. According to Lancaster and Stillman (2003), the key to working well with Boomers is to acknowledge their desire to make a difference, recognize their need for balance, and support their professional creativity.

The Generation Xers were born between 1965 and 1980. They are highly independent, entrepreneurial, and adaptive to both change and technology. Xers entered the workforce with a healthy degree of skepticism, not deluded by the idea that employers will look out for their best interest. According to Lancaster and Stillman (2003), the key to working well with Xers is to understand their need for flexibility and adapt to their swift pace of communication.

Millennials, born between 1981 and 1999, are described as realistic, confident and pragmatic. Raised by optimistic Boomers, Millennials are globally concerned, realistic, cyber literate, media savvy, and environmentally conscious. Their work style is highly collaborative, in contrast to the more independent Xers. Millennials believe institutions

should be judged on their own merit. According to Lancaster and Stillman (2003), the key to working well with Millennials is to recognize their need to see how they contribute and use technology to inform them.

Despite differences that exist between the generations of women in business, it is important that women work together for the advancement of all women. Appreciating the differences and learning to work together will create opportunities for mentoring, networking, and collaborating amongst the leaders of tomorrow.

### Obstacles to Success

As the saying goes, behind every successful man, is a successful woman. And behind every successful woman, are the struggles she has endured, and how she has overcome those obstacles to achieve her success in the workplace. Agonito (1993), aptly summarized what women in the workplace have in common—a lifetime of struggle against barriers, some subtle and almost imperceptible, others blatantly obtrusive. The most obvious barriers are external, found in the people, situations, and systems around us. Those that are most obscure (internal barriers) lie deep within us, the result of a lifetime of messages programming our thoughts, feelings, and memories.

The most difficult challenge for working women, next to recognizing the exact nature of such obstacles, is knowing what to do about them. With that in mind, the following sections identify and define the obstacles women face in the workplace and discuss how they can be overcome.

### *External Obstacles*

Catalyst (2001b) surveyed women executives and male CEOs in the US, Canada, and the UK about their top barriers to success. Among the American female respondents

they found the following to be the top barriers: (a) male stereotyping and preconceptions of women (52%), (b) exclusion from informal networks (49%), and (c) lack of significant line experience (47%). In contrast to this list from the women respondents, the American male CEOs surveyed felt the top barriers to women's success were: (a) lack of significant line experience (82%), (b) women not in pipeline long enough (67%), and (c) lack of mentoring (34%). There are many external obstacles and little agreement over what the top ones are. In some respects they are as different for each woman trying to succeed as the woman herself. Following are descriptions of the major obstacles identified in the literature.

### *Discrimination*

Discrimination has been identified as one of the barriers to women's advancement in the workplace (Burchett, 2006; Catalyst, 1998; Estrich, 2001). Yukl (2002) concurred stating, "Sex-based discrimination in the selection and promotion of leaders continues to be a serious problem in large organizations" (p. 420). Yukl goes on to state that "In the complete absence of sex-based discrimination, the number of women in chief executive positions in business and government should be close to 50 percent (p. 411). The U.S. Department of Labor found that "discrimination can take many forms, such as being hired less frequently in high-wage firms, receiving less training and fewer promotions, particularly into the executive suite, and being assigned to lower-paying jobs within the same occupations (Herman). In a 1995 study conducted by the Glass Ceiling Commission, although White males made up 43% of the workforce, they held 95% of the senior management jobs (Herman, 1999). White women held 4% of the senior management jobs and other minorities held 1%. The provisions of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act forbid discrimination in compensation, terms, or privileges of employment (Shoars, 2005).

The Glass Ceiling Commission (set up as part of Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1991) recommended that government and business take the following actions to break the glass ceiling and prevent further discrimination:

- All CEOs demonstrate commitment to workplace diversity.
- All strategic business plans specify efforts to achieve diversity both at the senior management level and throughout the workforce.
- All qualified individuals have an opportunity to compete based on ability and merit.
- The organizations expand access to core areas of each business and establish formal mentoring programs to prepare minorities and women for senior positions.
- The organizations provide formal training on company time.
- The organizations adopt policies that accommodate the balance between work and family responsibilities that impact career paths of all employees. (Twomey, 2005, p. 33)

The commission urged the government to lead by example, provide adequate resources to enforce laws, and improve data collection and public exposure to diversity data.

A related concept to discrimination that prevents women from rising into the executive ranks is homophily, which is the tendency to prefer working with or interacting with those who are similar demographically or attitudinally. Homophily restricts creative thinking and balanced decision making (Cox, 1993). When top management is dominated by one demographic group (e.g., European American men) and when promotion decisions are based on their preference for working with people who are demographically similar to

them, then significant bias is present in the advancement process. This impact has been documented in major corporations (Appold, Siengthai, & Kasarda, 1998; Cox; Morrison, 1992). Homophily is behind the lack of understanding that male CEOs have for barriers women face (Catalyst, 2001a; Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998) and for the avoidance of taking a stand on women's advancement by men who do not consciously oppose gender equality (Hale, 1996).

### *Stereotyping Women*

According to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (Mish, 1999), a stereotype is "a standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group and that represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment" (p. 1153). In this case, stereotyping women is the sexist attitude about women which stems from historical beliefs rooted in both conventional wisdom and philosophical tradition. In research conducted by Catalyst (2002), "Women report that stereotypes and preconceptions about women's roles and abilities are the number one obstacle to advancement" (p. 1).

Catalyst research (Prime, 2005) revealed that women and men senior executives have the same ambition and employ similar success strategies; yet, the gender gap in business leadership persists. Women executives reported that they faced an additional layer of cultural and environmental barriers to their achievement, which men only infrequently experience. The chief culprit was stereotyping. The Catalyst study surveyed 296 male and female corporate business leaders which revealed that gender-based stereotyping still persists in the workplace and that both men and women were guilty of these misperceptions. This stereotyping misrepresents the talents of women leaders,

undermines women's leadership and poses serious challenges to their career advancement.

Following are some of the common stereotypes that this research uncovered and that continue to influence the workplace.

Table 2

*Common Stereotypes of Women and Men*

Women's Traits	Men's Traits
Affectionate	Dominant
Appreciative	Achievement-oriented
Emotional	Active
Friendly	Ambitious
Sympathetic	Coarse
Mild	Forceful
Pleasant	Aggressive
Sensitive	Self-confident
Sentimental	Rational
Warm	Tough
Whiny	Unemotional

*Note.* From "Women 'Take care,' Men 'Take Charge:' Stereotyping of U.S. Business Leaders Exposed," by J. Prime, 2005, p.7, New York: Catalyst. Source: "The Psychology of Stereotyping" by D. Schneider, 2005, New York: Guilford Press

The list of stereotypes presented from the Catalyst research parallels research by Agonito (1993), which found these misperceptions of women:

- Women are weak.

- Women are emotional.
- Women cannot be trusted with important matters.
- Women are irrational and illogical.
- Women are indecisive.
- Women do not make good leaders.
- Women exist to serve others, especially men.
- Women belong in the domestic sphere with children.
- Women should be attached to and protected by men.
- Women are not interested in success and power.
- Women are temptresses—sexual creatures who undermine men.
- Women are petty and vain.

In addition, research (Catalyst, 1998, 2000; U.S. Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995) uncovered these commonly reported stereotypes and preconceptions:

- Women are not as committed to their careers as men.
- Women are not tough enough.
- Women do not want to work long hours.
- Women will not work unusual hours.
- Women are not aggressive enough.
- Women are too aggressive.
- Women lack quantitative skills.
- Women will not relocate.
- Women have difficulty making decisions.

Unfortunately, these stereotypes constantly influence people's expectations of women,



which affect their daily behavior. Catalyst's analysis of over 40 years of leadership research, spanning more than 15 years, failed to support the perception that stereotypes are reality; "Women leaders are still judged better at 'caretaking' leader behaviors and men better at 'take charge' behaviors" (Prime, 2005, p. 12).

Gender prejudice can take many forms in organizations. One of the most basic preconceptions is that men make better managers. A study comparing samples from 1975, 1984, and 1999, found that the preference for masculine characteristics still operates in organizations, although it has decreased somewhat over the last 15 years (Powell, Butterfield, and Parent, 2002). Preconceptions that women leaders are less competent have meant that women must prove themselves repeatedly with exceptional performance (Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998). Preconceptions of women being less interested in challenges have meant that women must identify and explicitly ask for challenging assignments rather than having them offered to them, as they are to equivalent high-potential men (Ragins, et al.).

Research had found that women still feel the need to adapt their behavioral style so that men can avoid feeling intimidated (Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998). In fact, there seems to be a more limited range of acceptable behavior for female leaders (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; Ragins, et al., 1998).

The fact that stereotypes so often operate subconsciously makes it especially hard to deal with them. Stereotypes act like filters over people's minds, preventing women from being taken seriously. Women who behave differently than the stereotypes call them into question. For example, if a woman dresses provocatively at the office, she is reinforcing the filters on people's minds that cause them to see women as sex objects (Agonito, 1993).

“Women who wish to succeed [in] business must overcome obstacles these stereotypes create” (De Pass-Albers, 2004, p. 197).

There are three common management archetypes (created by using stereotypes) which are used to label women in business that men and society have created and reinforced—ultrafeminine, seductress, and guy (Schaefer, 1992; Shoars, 2005). These archetypes maintain the value system of competition, hierarchies, winning over personal growth, and short-term rather than long-term strategies and outcomes. To gain power, many successful women in the 1980s dressed and acted like men. They wore pinstriped suits and acted more aggressively. It was believed that to be viewed as successful as men and to be accepted by men, women must look and act like men. These women went against the socially acceptable gender expectations in order to advance their careers. “Any person who fails to fulfill the societal role assigned to their gender is negatively viewed and evaluated” (Shoars, p. 42). The ultrafeminine archetype describes a woman who is very passive and always defers to men. Her weakness is her power and she uses it to make men dependent on her for reassurance. The seductress is unusually pretty and uses her sexuality as power to attract men and compete with women (Schaefer). According to Mooney (2005), “The media fuels feelings of sexual pressure in the workplace by depicting the modern businesswoman as equal parts sultry and successful” (p. 77).

### *The Pipeline Theory*

Many theorists and male CEOs believe women have not made it into the executive ranks in larger numbers because they have not been in *the pipeline* long enough. Those in the managerial pipeline long enough experience a natural career progression into higher level positions (Heilman, 1997; Ragins, et al., 1998). There are many reasons that more

women are not in the pipeline, which include time out of the workforce to raise children, not being selected for the pipeline based on stereotypes and discrimination, and lack of general management or line experience (line experience is a position with direct responsibility for profit). An inhospitable corporate culture prevents many women from advancing into executive positions (Ragins, et al.). An inhospitable culture refers to values and norms that discourage balancing career aspirations with nonwork responsibilities (Morrison, 1992), communicate women do not belong in executive positions (Heilman), or require that women accomplish major tasks without sufficient resources (Morrison; Ohlott, Ruderman, & McCauley, 1994). One recent study found that an inhospitable culture significantly reduced women's promotions into lower and middle management, therefore reducing their chances of inclusion in the pipeline for executive positions (Tharenou, 2001). According to Indvik (2004), "A males-only organizational hierarchy hindered women's promotions...while having female leaders in the hierarchy fostered women's promotions at those levels" (p. 276).

Indvik (2004) questions the pipeline theory stating, "The pipeline theory has no data to support it" (p. 274). If the simple passage of time were enough to proceed up the career ladder, then women's representation at the top levels would be many times higher than what it is today (Heilman, 1997). McCorduck (1996) noted that since the top corporate executive positions were 99% male in 1970 and 95% in 1995, it would take 300 years for women to achieve parity in business. A study of 70 women executives across the United States found that the average length of time it took them to reach the executive suites in their companies was 11.5 years (Gallagher, 1996).

The idea that women need line experience before moving into executive positions

does have data to support it (Ragins, et al., 1998). However, in another study of 1,366 middle and top managers, researchers found that top executives were not distinguished by their line experience. Hurley, Fagenson-Eland, & Sonnenfeld (1997) found that top executives were distinguished from middle managers by the breadth of positions and departments in which they had worked. This study noted that the longer managers had served in a line position, the less likely they were to move into top management. Gallagher (1996) found the timing of positions may be important and in need of future research. Executive women reported their staff experience (functions without direct profit-making responsibility) occurring later in their careers when compared to men.

### *Tokenism*

Tokenism is defined by *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* as “the policy or practice of making only a symbolic effort (as to desegregate; Mish, 1999, p. 1240). Any entity that hires only a token number of employees who are women, or black, or who belong to some other category, is making a gesture that is merely symbolic. In 1968, President Lyndon Johnson expanded his executive order mandating affirmative action to prevent discrimination to include women. Any companies meeting the size requirements and holding government contracts were forced to hire a percentage of women into their workforce. Goals and timetables were added to the law in 1971 (Mooney, 2005). Weiss (1999) cited New York City's 5,618 female police officers as representing only 15% of the city force, the usual cutoff figure for what is called a “token” number of the workforce. Tokenism in the workplace amounts to a policy of making an on-the-surface-only effort toward full integration (Weiss).

Tokenism makes it hard for women to break through the glass ceiling when the

establishment thinks it already has as many women as it needs. Tokens, who experience increased visibility, attract a disproportionate amount of attention, face greater performance pressures, and are subjected to stereotyping, are made to feel like a representative or symbol of the minority group instead of being seen as individuals. As a result they experience increased stress (Gardiner & Tiggemann, 1999).

Being a token woman means your success largely depends upon the acceptance and approval of the men above you (Mooney, 2005). Mooney found that “Token women were often rewarded, directly or indirectly, by their male peers, limiting the potential for communication or alliances” (p. 110). One of Mooney’s interviewees explained how it felt to be one of the first female product analysts in a major manufacturing firm in the late 1970s: “You couldn’t afford to go on record as being different. You didn’t even think about calling attention to yourself by bucking the system. All your energy was spent trying to gain acceptance and fit in” (p. 110).

When women are isolated and/or ignored, as is the case with tokens, they will back off of their convictions. The men they work with will not hear what they are saying and the women start to feel invisible. According to Schaefer (1992), the women will try to reappear by blending into the White Male System. Estrich (2000) explains to combat tokenism:

The most important step to getting more women into very high places in the workplace or politics is just to get more women in the room. When there is only one woman in the room, the chance that all women will fail is too high, and the burden on the one who’s trying can be insurmountable. But, after women succeed, they pay back their pioneering foremothers by helping the next wave of women. (p. 163)

Ragland and Hill (1995) found there is a lack of mentoring by both men and women when the female wanting mentoring considers herself to be a token.

*Pink Collar Ghettos*

Most women still find it hard to break out of their traditional job roles. The overwhelming majority of working women continue to be grouped in so-called female jobs (Frankel, 2004; Weiss, 1999). In the early 1990s, three-quarters of working women in the United States were employed in five categories: household worker; service employee (for example, waitress); elementary school teacher; nurse; and secretarial or clerical office worker. These job categories are commonly described as pink-collar ghettos. Pink because that color is more often associated with women's clothing than men's. Ghetto refers to a setting (originally a section of a city) populated by members of a particular group. So a pink-collar ghetto is an office, or day-care center, or nursing home, or any other workplace in which most of the employees are women. Velvet Ghetto is another term representative of female dominated occupations.

#### *Pay Inequity*

Briles (1996) defined pay inequity as a policy whereby businesses choose to pay individuals with equal skills and performance at an unequal rate. In 1979, women between the ages of 25 and 64 made 62 % of what men did. In 1992, for the same age group, women earned 74 % of what men were making. By 1997, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, full-time working women remained at just under 75 cents for every dollar men were earning which reflects no change in pay disparity. By 2004, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics numbers, women earned 77% of the compensation earned by men (Bernstein, 2004). A November 2003 congressional report revealed that men with children earned 2% more than men without, while women with children earn 2.5% less than their peers without them (Mooney, 2005). Another factor in pay inequity was examined by Ostroff and Atwater (2003). They investigated 2,178

managers across a wide range of industries and found that not only do women managers earn approximately 9% less than male managers, “but also managerial pay is lower when manager’s referent groups are largely female, when subordinates are outside the prime age group, and when peers and supervisors are younger” (p. 725).

Briles (1996) posited that as technology continues to evolve, the need for physical strength on most jobs will continue to diminish, making way for women to move into more fields that were previously dominated by male workers. Briles also stated that jobs requiring mental acuity and social skills, both of which are areas of strength for women, will continue to grow in importance in this economy. This may eventually help to ameliorate the pay inequity faced by working women.

According to the U.S. Glass Ceiling Commission (1995), “Lower compensation levels...act to disqualify high potential women as executive search firm candidates when corporations are looking outside for senior managers” (p. 155). Catalyst (1998) found unequal appraisal and compensation systems to be one of the barriers to retaining and advancing women. Another reason to be concerned about gender pay inequality, according to Donovan, Halpern, & Sargeant (2002) is work and life satisfaction, “People with higher incomes are more satisfied than those with lower incomes, and an increase in personal income does bring higher levels of satisfaction” (p. 2).

### *Balancing Home and Work*

In his book, *Authentic Leadership*, former CEO Bill George (2003) declared, “A balanced life makes you a better leader....Balanced leaders develop healthier organizations....Balanced leaders are able to make more thoughtful decisions and lead more effectively” (p. 46). Mooney (2005) stated “Balancing work and home is one of the

areas in which professional women feel most vulnerable” (p. 103). Engberg (1999) found while researching her book, *It's Not the Glass Ceiling, It's the Sticky Floor*, that while women had made great strides in the workplace, it was balancing their responsibilities at home that was a critical challenge for today's working women. According to Burchett (2006), “Women are finding a more significant struggle with work interfering with their personal lives, than with their personal lives interfering with work. It is also clear that the more hours a woman spends in the office the less work life balance she has” (p. iv). Burchett goes on to explain that many women are taking work home in an effort to alleviate the imbalance that extended hours in the office can cause. Her research found this practice is also decreasing women's work life balance.

Engberg (1999) cautioned that each choice made in forging a work-family equilibrium has its pluses and minuses and found that the best any mother can do for her and her family is to make her own choices based on her own values. Orenstein (2001) explained that women today face a series of dilemmas on the continuum between modernity and tradition that leave them in a state of flux, holding out for an ideal of shared parenting but anticipating inequality. Engberg insisted that women train their husbands to recognize the importance and complexity of raising a family and to engage in it as fully as women do. In a study of 2,119 high achieving men and women, Hewlett (2002) found that men still do little to participate in family responsibilities in the home (see also Evans & Avis, 1999; Rapoport & Bailyn, 2005). According to Hewlett, high achieving men helped their children with homework only 9% of the time compared to high achieving women who helped 37% of the time. The figures were just as dismal for other household responsibilities: men took off work for a sick child 9% of the time, organized children's



activities 3% of the time, cleaned house 5% of the time, prepared meals 9% of the time, and shopped for groceries 7% of the time.

Engberg posited the greatest test will be to educate and prepare the next generation of daughters and granddaughters for balancing the challenges that are uniquely a woman's. Recent research by Ruderman, Ohlott, Penzer, and King (2002) found that balancing work and nonwork responsibilities had a positive effect on women managers and enhanced their psychological resources, social support, and management skills.

Briles (1996) researched gender issues by surveying 5,000 women (1270 respondents) and interviewing 130 women to pinpoint their major workplace challenges. Balancing work and home life was one of the most enduring challenges as reported by the respondents. Briles defined balancing as any action that brings personal life, family and work into harmony. For working women with families, balancing life is easier said than done. As Briles explained, women are exhausted. She found that many feel their workdays are too long, too hard, and definitely not fair. Most women are simply overloaded. They have extra pressures from balancing their family and workplace responsibilities as well as their own personal lives. Because women are overloaded, they experience stress, anger, resentment, worry, illness, and most of all exhaustion. Research by Higbie (2004) found that surprisingly, over 63% of the surveyed female educational leaders disagreed that mothers should take primary responsibility for children and 84% disagreed that women should stay home with young children.

Briles (1996) suggested that working women need "wives" of their own (see also Matz, 2001). Research by Kirchmeyer (1998) found that a nonemployed spouse was helpful to career advancement for both men and women. However, research by Tharenou,

Latimer, and Conroy (1994) found that families proved to be a source of support to male leaders' career advancement but a source of demand for female leaders. Briles suggested that women need to learn how to say no to added responsibilities not in their job description and to carve out time for themselves. Research by Catalyst (1998) concluded a work environment that values long hours over actual performance or that offers limited support for work-family initiatives is a barrier to women's advancement.

In a study conducted by Astin and Leland (1991) across three generations of women leaders, they found about 50% of the older generation had never married compared to 10% of the second and third generations, noting that it was much harder to manage a demanding career as well as a marriage and family before the 1960s. In contrast to other studies, Worthen (2005), recently surveyed 152 executive women in public administration who strongly disagreed that family responsibility hindered leadership development, although 57.8% did report having children. In another contradictory study conducted by the London School of Economics on 732 medium sized manufacturing companies in the US, France, Germany, and the UK, it was found that providing employees with a good work-life balance did not lead to higher productivity and was costly to implement, resulting in significantly lower profitability (Daneshkhu, 2006; Sharapov & Adamson, 2006). The economic study did find that work-life balance was significantly higher in firms promoting women into higher level management positions. The first two findings were incongruent with the literature review suggesting women do have difficulty in balancing family responsibilities with their career goals and that encouraging work-life balance is profitable (Catalyst, 2003; Faircloth, 1998; Gallagher, 1996; Morris, 1998; Sellers, 1996, 1998). This may represent a new trend away from difficulties in balancing work and home

life. In the Worthen study, the women executives reported their self-perception was measured not only as a professional woman but also as a mother and wife.

Researchers (Edson, 1988; Higbie, 2004; Tallerico, 2000) agreed that the tendency of women to put the care of children and families first and careers second limits the entry of women into leadership positions. Burchett (2006) posited that “Work life balance is not something easily attained, especially for a high-level professional woman with young children; however, it can be achieved” (p. 84). Burchett went on to state that successful “working women should consider themselves as a role model for their sons and daughters. Professional women who have achieved work-life balance portray a lasting and encouraging image for younger generations” (p. 41).

### *Power*

Women tend to view power differently than men. According to Astin & Leland (1991), women leaders treat “power as an expandable resource that is produced and shared through interaction by leader and followers alike” (p. 1). Traditional definitions of power have a lot to do with dominating over others and benefiting unfairly from their work. According to Steinem (1995), women tend to define power as the ability to use their own talents and to control their own lives. When women have attempted to act out the traditional meaning of power, they have been culturally punished for using unfeminine behavior.

The higher up the corporate ladder women try to climb, the more they realize promotion decisions rest with those who control the hierarchical power. Women are not usually included in the group of executives who make the decisions (Shoars, 2005). Many refer to the patriarchy in hierarchical organizations as the “good old boys’ club.” Gallagher

(2001) explained:

Wherever one looks in the world, women still have relatively little decision-making power either inside the...organizations themselves, or in the political and economic institutions with which these organizations must interface. It is as if one woman at the top is as much as the system can absorb without being thrown into a paroxysm of professional anguish about the potential effects—on status, salaries, and self-esteem—of feminization. (p. 64)

In addition to the power to grant promotions, there is the power to be wielded when in a particular position. According to Catalyst's research on leadership (Prime, 2005):

There are two primary sources of power that leaders use to get the job done: interpersonal and position power....Position power relates to how leaders use their hierarchical positions in organizations to motivate others. Behaviors such as supporting, rewarding, and mentoring are associated with this kind of power because each requires some position of authority or control over key resources. Alternatively, leader behaviors in...problem-solving, inspiring, and team-building—mapped to less formal, interpersonal power. This sort of power...[comes from] the leader's perceived expertise and charisma. (p. 19)

The results of Catalyst's research (Prime, 2005) held that because of the stereotypical misperceptions of men about women's problem solving abilities, the spillover effect negated women's natural abilities in emotive, relationship-building traits, therefore negating their interpersonal power. Since women do not often have position power, they are usually left with no power. Women leading in typically male occupations had the hardest time overcoming stereotyping because their followers, usually males, shared the same misperceptions regarding women's problem-solving abilities. When the followers question the decisions of the leader, much less is accomplished, adding to the woman leader's problems.

### *Female Competition*

According to Higbie (2004), "Some women in top leadership positions who are token women in powerful positions feel threatened by competition from other women" (p.

76-77). Mooney (2005) found that high achieving women “get used to being ‘onlys’ and as a result are more critical and less supportive of other women, for fear of appearing less unique” (p. 122). In her book *Women’s Reality*, Anne Wilson Schaef (1992) describes what she calls “an emerging female system in a White male society” (p. xi). According to Schaef, many women find it hard to support one another’s efforts. In fact, many women actively try to destroy their competition. Many believe there is not enough room at the top for too many successful women. Schaef calls this the “Queen Bee” syndrome. It accounts in part for the phenomenon of successful “token” women dissociating from the women’s movement, refusing to give credit to the women who have gone before them, and thinking “I made it on my merits alone, and so can you!” (p. 49). Schaef explained, “Women who buy into the White Male System often use power—when they get it—like men: against other women and to destroy them. Our dislike and distrust of femaleness goes very deep” (p. 49). These findings are confirmed by Mooney who stated, “Women in male-dominated firms more frequently reported that their relationships with female coworkers were competitive in ways that inhibited their ability to work together. Collaborating with other women was considered a highly questionable route to success” (p. 112).

During Mooney’s (2005) research and interviews, she identified a cycle that professions went through—a continuum from almost exclusively male to liberally gender mixed. In the first of the three-phase cycle, the initial few women entered the hallowed male halls and united to face the highly unreceptive climate. They helped each other and tried to organize to address issues from pay inequity to work-family concerns. In the second phase, doors were pushed open a little further and the former collective “we’re all in this together” attitude disappeared in favor of individuals hoarding their spoils. Since

women did not have to use all their energy to break down doors, there was more time for selfishness and backstabbing. As the number of women in the profession grew, the third phase brought a realization that resources were not as limited as originally perceived and the “below-the-belt” competition cooled. Women then began to form professional networks and collaborate with their female colleagues. Unfortunately, there is still resentment toward younger women benefiting from the hard work of the senior women who had to work so hard to break down barriers.

Research by Ely (1994) has shown that women are more likely to work together successfully in an atmosphere in which they are allowed to compete openly and legitimately for promotions, raises, and other rewards. According to a 2002 survey commissioned by Oppenheimer Funds, 82% of executive businesswomen played organized sports growing up, and the majority stated that lessons learned on the playing field have contributed to their business success (Mooney, 2005).

The literature regarding organizations with few women in leadership roles seems to suggest that women do not cooperate with each other. When women do help each other (e.g., in a mentoring relationship) it was found to be effective in assisting women through the glass ceiling (Shoars, 2005).

### *The Glass Ceiling*

“The term the ‘glass ceiling’ first came into use in 1986 when two *Wall Street Journal* reporters coined the phrase to describe the invisible barrier that blocks women from the top jobs in corporate America” (Catalyst, 2000, p. 1). The glass ceiling is one of the most impervious barriers that women encounter when seeking top executive positions. Shoars (2005) found that “glass ceilings are not the product of a singular causation but are

instead multi-faceted and systemic in nature” (p. 9). Among the many reasons cited for the existence of the glass ceiling are the belief that women are easily diverted from their careers by family considerations, stereotypes about women’s ability to function in the tough, competitive environment of business, a caste system that relegates women to peripheral roles, and the intangible feeling of men at the top being uncomfortable with women beside them (Catalyst). As defined in Chapter 1, the glass ceiling is an invisible artificial barrier, created by attitudinal and organizational prejudices, which bars women from top executive jobs. It is a barrier to further advancement once women have attained a certain level. They can see the top, but cannot reach its spiral (International Labour Office, 1997; Savage, 2002).

In 1989, the U.S. Department of Labor began a multifaceted investigation into the glass ceiling in corporate America. In 1991, their report included the following findings:

- Monitoring for equal access and opportunity at higher levels is not considered a corporate responsibility.
- Most corporations do not have systems in place to monitor salary, bonuses, incentives, and perquisites.
- Minorities have plateaued at lower levels in corporations than have women.
- Recruitment is frequently carried out by word of mouth and employee recommendations.
- Critical development assignments, such as high visibility committees and task forces, are not available to women and minorities.
- Accountability for Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) regulations did not reach to senior levels. (Catalyst, 2000)

In 1992, the U.S. Secretary of Labor, Lynn Martin, established the Glass Ceiling Commission to investigate this phenomenon further and make recommendations for eliminating the glass ceiling.

Savage (2002) noted that most corporations operate as meritocracies where promotions are earned through hard work. Savage explained:

However, between upper middle management and the executive level, corporate culture nearly always shifts to a culture based on power. The change is invisible and rarely, if ever, acknowledged openly. To advance further, a worker must play by the new rules even though they've never been explained. In fact, the new rules are so important to the way top teams function that even highly talented people who can't conform will be blocked or eliminated. Though few people talk about it, this is the real glass ceiling. (pp. 49-50)

Savage found that at the top levels of management, differences between executives are so small that promotions must be handed out based on another set of values, that of power or politics. "At the executive level, you must become part of the power culture" (p. 50).

Briles (1996) found that although the glass ceiling does exist, in reality, 90% of the women in the workplace are more concerned about the muddy bottom (Velvet Ghettos) than they are about the glass ceiling. Even if only 10% of working women are focused on getting to the top executive positions, that equates to 6.6 million women (U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 2005b). White (1992) posited that the higher women rise in management, the farther up the ceiling goes. White explained the ceiling does exist but is more transparent for women today.

In addition to the glass ceiling, Weiss (1999) described other aspects of the workplace that troubled women trying to achieve success. Some women reported outright hostility from men on the job. Others mentioned the isolation they felt when they were the only women in the workplace. Still others told of sexual harassment. Working mothers



despaired at the difficulty of balancing the conflicting demands of work and home. Women who were members of minority groups often faced barriers based on race as well as sex. Women of all races complained that it is generally harder for them to rise in a business or profession than it would if they were men. Many complained about earning less money than men who were doing the same or similar work. Weiss also described dismantling the glass ceiling and stated that women themselves would have to lead the way. Of course, their employers must help, as well as those in the media, in civic organizations, and in government.

### *Internal Obstacles*

Internal obstacles are career saboteurs. They are defined as actions people take, both conscious and unconscious, that interfere with or prevent success in their chosen career. According to Andrew J. DuBrin (2002), author of *Your Own Worst Enemy: How to Overcome Career Self-Sabotage*, “they are hidden barriers to success” (p. 141).

### *The “Nice Girl” Syndrome*

According to Lois Frankel (2004), internationally recognized executive coach and author of *Nice Girls Don’t Get the Corner Office*:

From early childhood, girls are taught that their well-being and ultimate success is contingent upon acting in certain stereotypical ways, such as being polite, soft-spoken, compliant, and relationship-oriented. Throughout their lifetimes, this is reinforced through media, family, and social messages. (p. xvi)

Being a “Nice Girl” means putting others needs and wants first. By striving to be liked and accepted (which psychologists have long known to motivate women), the Nice Girl suppresses her own desires and feelings, her own belief systems and values, to accommodate those of others.

Research by Evans and Avis (1999) found that Baby Boomer women are the

ultimate Nice Girls, adding that it seems to be a generational flaw and that they do not know how to ask for help. From childhood, women learn that it is less painful to act like a Nice Girl than to assume behaviors more appropriate for adult women (and accepted behavior for men and boys; Frankel, 2004). In the workplace, the Nice Girl stance has serious consequences. Since she primarily accommodates the agendas of others, she is not taken seriously and is often exploited. Succeeding in a career requires qualities opposed to being a Nice Girl – independence, assertiveness, creativity, competence, and power. The Nice Girl problem is widespread and affects women of all races and ethnic groups. For these women, it is critical to shed the powerless Nice Girl persona in order to be treated fairly in the workplace (Agonito, 1993).

According to Savage (2002), “the ‘nice girl, seen and not heard’ attitude that women learn hurts them more the further they go in their careers” (p. 50). Women who want to make it to the top should develop an executive presence by learning how to speak up and build social capital; otherwise, they risk becoming marginalized.

### *Self-Imposed Barriers*

Francis Hesselbein (2002), Chairman and founding President of the Drucker Foundation, identified the following obstacles to women’s success that are internally generated:

- Lack of formal, articulated goals and a road map to meet them. They should be written and close at hand.
- No clear understanding of one’s own strengths and weaknesses (with a plan to improve the latter).
- Believing in two sets of ethics, one for personal and the other for business

- Lack of generosity—not sharing ideas, time, encouragement, respect, compliments, and feedback—resulting in the same treatment in return.
- Leading from the rear—being tentative, fence sitting, not taking responsibility.
- Always stressing what others do wrong instead of focusing on their strengths.
- Lack of a positive approach and failing to present solutions.
- Not investing in one’s own learning and development.
- Blaming the messenger when bad news is presented.
- Promoting a bottom-line mentality.
- Not walking the talk.

Hesselbein posits that confronting these self-imposed barriers takes courage and self-discipline but ultimately would result in high performance.

### *Faulty Thinking*

According to Schaeff (1992), most women see relationships as central to their universe. Everything else just rotates around the outside boundary, such as work, creativity, intellectual pursuits, and the like. When women see themselves as players in the White Male System, they put work in the center of their universe. Schaeff explains: “We become ‘workaholics.’ We spend more and more hours on the job. Money, power, and influence become very important to us. We want to ‘make it,’ and our criteria for ‘making it’ are those of the White Male System” (p. 115). Relationships become less important and some fall apart because we spend so little time maintaining them (Hooks, 2000; Schaeff).

According to Schein (1993), “women of talent and ability [are forced] to enter a race track with more obstacles and pitfalls than that of their male counterparts” (p. 26). The

next section will illuminate some of the ways high achieving women overcome the obstacles and attain their success.

### Success Strategies

The meaning of success is different for individual women. For some women, success is purely based on doing whatever makes them happy, choosing to stay home and raise children or finding a comfortable balance between a career and home life. For others, success may be money, power, and status. Regardless of the definition of success, the path women take to achieve success typically involves several common strategies including mentoring, networking, and high performance (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). Catalyst (2001b) surveyed women executives in the US, Canada, and the UK about their top career strategies. They found the following to be the top advancement strategies: (a) consistently exceed performance expectations, (b) develop a style with which male managers are comfortable, (c) gain line management experience, and (d) seek out difficult or highly visible job assignments.

In her research on the career progression of women in U.S. corporations, De Pass-Albers (2004) found that men and women follow distinct patterns of advancement. Promising male professionals enter the fast track early in their careers. High potential women's careers take off much later, usually after reaching middle management. De Pass-Albers also found that the men who have progressed the furthest have one thing in common—"a strong network of mentors and corporate sponsors who nurture their professional development" (p. 198).

### *External Strategies*

Women's strategies for achieving success can be separated into two categories,

external and internal strategies. External strategies are those outward processes that women can do to make a difference in their career trajectory such as attaining more education, seeking out a mentor, developing a network, or planning their career. Internal strategies are those processes which emanate from the mind and affect thought and emotion.

### *Education*

Women's pursuit of higher education has contributed to their rise into higher-paying occupations. In 1970, only 11% of women ages 25 to 64 had completed four or more years of college (compared to 16% of men). "Over the 1980s and 1990s, having children became less of an impediment to career development and to graduate school attendance" (Nettles & Millett, 2006, pp. 11-12). By 2001, 32% of women held college degrees, the same as the percentage of men holding college degrees (Chao & Utgoff, 2004). In fact in 2000, women accounted for the most bachelor's degrees awarded (57.1%) and graduate enrollments (57.9%). Although women had made tremendous gains, they were still underrepresented in graduate degrees, earning only 29.5% of earned doctoral degrees (up from 10% in 1900; Nettles & Millett). The numbers show that women's pursuit of higher education has increased. In fact, in 1996 there were 8.4 million women and 6.7 million men studying at American colleges and universities. By 2007, it is estimated that those schools will enroll 9.2 million women versus 6.9 million men (Peters, 2005).

Executives surveyed by Korn/Ferry International rated education as the single most important factor in their success (Catalyst, 2000). Education was also found to be "a key contributing factor of success" in female promotions in a Delphi study conducted by Palmer (2006, p. 75). As Salas (2005) found, "Business education may be the determining

factor in the number of women succeeding in American business” (p. 39).

Graney-Mulholland (2005) posited in this new era of business that is dynamic, technology-based, and borderless, education is a key component for the mature professional woman to flourish in the workplace. He cites the necessity of acquiring new skills and knowledge to meet both internal and external challenges. Graney-Mulholland suggests that since professional women are living longer and most will have to provide for themselves financially, education is a key factor in maintaining the skill set necessary to attain the professional status that they desire.

### *Mentoring*

Women need positive and active mentors to be successful in the workplace (Indvik, 2004). In research conducted by Joyce (2005), it was found that 75% of successful women leaders reported having a mentor. In a study by Jordan (2006), 90% of the women executives reported having had a mentor, with 50% having had a male mentor, 30% having had a female mentor, and 10% having had both male and female mentors. Having a mentor ranked second only to education as a significant factor in the success of surveyed corporate leaders (Catalyst, 2000).

Mentors are trusted, more experienced persons who, by mutual consent, serve as role models, teachers, or sponsors to encourage, counsel, and befriend a lesser experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter’s professional career development and advancement (De Pass-Albers, 2004; Indvik, 2004; Werhane & Freeman, 1997).

According to Savage (2002), “A mentor can help you determine whether you’ll thrive in the culture above the glass ceiling” (p. 51). Salas (2005) explained “Mentoring is considered an important factor in encouraging younger women to advance in corporate or

entrepreneurial pursuit. Whether formal or informal, a mentoring relationship helps a ‘mentoree’ develop visions of herself and her capabilities that were not formerly allowed” (p. 38). According to Benton’s (2001) research with CEOs, mentors should be chosen from several walks of life for maximum intellectual diversity. She advises women should include “the 57-year-old gray-haired-wisdom-filled curmudgeons and the 24-year-old technology whizzes” (p. xvi). Wallace (2001) agreed and explained that while male mentors helped young women in direct salary gains, female mentors provided more emotional and social support, which added to career satisfaction, job commitment, and work-family balance.

Very few women have reached positions of any real authority in their organizations without experiencing a mentoring relationship (Wellington & Spence, 2001). Wellington and Spence, of Catalyst, Inc., one of the nation’s leading sources of information on working women, explained that women using mentors have a higher tendency to climb the corporate success ladder versus those women who do not have the opportunity to use a mentor. In many cases, women choose not to work with a mentor at all due to a strong belief in total independence, fear, or just a personal preference. Wellington and Spence’s findings are supported by more than thirty years of research conducted by Catalyst on women in the workplace.

For Catalyst’s (1996) groundbreaking survey, *Women in Corporate Leadership*, more than 1,200 women were surveyed, and 20 women at the vice president level and above were interviewed. According to research findings, mentors were found to be even more important to a successful career than hard work, talent, and intelligence because women continued to have a need to learn how to function and operate in a world of

business dominated by men in higher-level positions. Mentors provided valuable guidance and wisdom along the way. A good mentor connected women seeking success in the corporate world with experiences and people they needed to move ahead. Just as important, a mentor provided insight as to how to handle different working situations. In other words, a good mentor can pull strings and show a woman how to advance her business career (Mooney, 2005; Wellington & Spence, 2001). Frankel (2004) likens executive management to a game, one that has rules, boundaries, winners, and losers. She has found that “Women tend to approach work more like an event (picnic, concert, fund-raiser) where everyone comes together for the day to play together nicely” (p. 20). She advises women who want to achieve success to identify a mentor—one who is successful at playing the game and who can teach you the rules.

De Pass-Albers (2004) analyzed the differences between genders with regard to the situations, obstacles, and challenges they encountered in their leadership roles. A key finding of the research was that women who had plateaued in their management careers received more instructional mentoring to improve skills, as opposed to women executives who enjoyed fuller developmental relationships with their mentors. De Pass-Albers also examined the differences between the types of behavioral competencies and leadership power acquired by a male mentee versus a female mentee. She concluded that female mentees acquired legitimate, expert, and information power to a greater degree than male mentees.

Nettles and Millet’s (2006) research supports Wellington and Spence’s findings on the importance of mentors for women who are trying to get ahead in their career. Nettles and Millet cite a study by Clark and Corcoran done in 1986 where 147 faculty women from



the University of Michigan were interviewed during the training phase of their careers. It was found that those with encouraging mentors were more productive than those with unsupportive ones. “Negative role-modeling was the primary limitation in [mentoring] relationships but also considered beneficial in what was learned as a result” (Giddis, 2003, p. 65). Catalyst (1998) found negative mentoring and self-selection (where women move into staff areas instead of line positions) were barriers to women’s career advancement. Research by Ragins, Cotton, & Miller (2000) demonstrated that bad mentoring was worse than no mentoring and that formal mentoring programs were less effective for women than for men.

Research by Brooks and Brooks (1999) also found that mentors played a crucial role in career development (see also Catalyst, 2000). They stated having a mentor is one of the most important strategies for success. Brooks and Brooks discovered many successful women have had mentoring relationships and believed they would not have achieved the level of success they had without the guidance and wisdom of their mentors. In addition to career success, Cox (2004) concluded that women who reported having current mentors exhibited significantly more career and organizational commitment.

Research has shown that formal mentoring contributes to the professional and personal development of women who seek to compete in a White male-dominated environment (Amabisca, 2005; Giddis, 2003; Salas, 2005; Smith, 2005). Smith established that women of color were underrepresented in management and executive level positions at Ahold, a worldwide supermarket holding company. In her study, Smith found that mentors assisted the participants in overcoming the challenges they faced that White males did not face because of White privilege. Smith stated, “The participants who had female

mentors or mentors of color had it reinforced time and time again, that there is a second set of rules for people of color and women than for White males” (p. 89).

Smith (2005) went on to state the importance of decision-makers having the opportunity to observe women in action. Women need visible assignments, which mentors can help to orchestrate. The following additional findings emerged from the research: the participants directly attributed their career advancement at Ahold to their mentors, employee retention was attributed to the positive interpersonal relationship between the mentor and the mentee, the women in the study preferred mentors of the same race, the mentees did not have a strong preference regarding the gender of the mentor, and women of color were willing to mentor other women of color who pursue careers in food retailing. The study also found that networking is needed and valued by the participants.

Amabisca (2005) surveyed 83 women in a yearlong Hispanic leadership program and found that because of their structured mentoring relationship, both mentees and mentors increased their educational attainment and most mentees experienced an increase in job responsibilities and status (e.g., from technical to managerial, from managerial to executive). An interesting finding was that over half of the mentees did not select mentors of the same gender and ethnicity. Giddis (2003) concluded that gender may not affect career development functions but may affect psychosocial aspects of the mentoring relationship.

In contrast, Shoars (2005) found that female-centered mentoring (women mentoring women) was more effective than male-centered mentoring in assisting women through glass ceilings. Shoars surveyed the most powerful men and influential women in the radio industry to gain insight as to the height and scope of radio’s glass ceilings. Shoars

also interviewed six women who were part of a female-centered networking-mentoring program designed to assist women achieve executive positions.

Mentoring women continues to be a work in progress. Access to mentors is often a problem for women (Catalyst, 2000; Higbie, 2004; Nettles and Millet, 2006). Even today, men are the traditional mentors. When women look upward into management, they often see no one who resembles them. Unfortunately, in organizations where women can and do advance, there are just not enough mentors to go around. Some women currently in high achieving positions within companies are happy to mentor and are often committed to several mentoring relationships, but they do not have adequate time to mentor everyone appropriately (Wellington & Spence, 2001). Women leaders who were mentored feel a responsibility to mentor others (Giddis, 2003).

Mentoring is only one success strategy in rising to the top in an organization. Women also need to pursue effective career management strategies on their own through networking (Brooks & Brooks, 1999).

### *Networking*

Networking is “the systematic process of developing helpful contacts, linking people for assisting, supporting and helping each other find needed resources, information, job leads, opportunities, and feedback” (Buddy, & Nowka, 1996). Steinem (1995) describes networking as a loosely knit and lateral process. According to Catalyst (2000), networks serve as a forum through which employees can discuss concerns and build a sense of community. Networks also provide opportunities to develop leadership and management skills, influence management, reach out to others beyond the organization, and can assist in identifying women with the potential for promotion to senior level

positions (Kelly & Dabul Marin, 1998). Several studies have found that women tend to be excluded or have to work harder to be included in networks (Catalyst, 1998; Higbie, 2004; Morrison, 1992; Ohlott, Ruderman, & McCauley, 1994; Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998) or have to create their own opportunities to network (Bell & Nkomo, 2001).

According to Gallagher and Golant (2001), networking with others is a common, and critical, strategy to reaching a high level of success in an organization. Their research, involving more than 200 women who had made it within two steps of the CEO in the Fortune 1,000 companies, found that once connections were made, the relationships created through networking needed to be developed and maintained. This can be accomplished most effectively through keeping a database of contacts, joining professional organizations, and attending charitable events to stay connected (Scheele, 1999).

It is not that women cannot get anywhere on their own. Brooks and Brooks pointed out that experience and credentials can land women jobs, but women would be more successful networking with others and creating a system of contacts and relationships to enable them to successfully move upward in their careers. Research has shown most successful women take help anywhere they can get it (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). Wirth (2000) found that even when women do secure higher-level positions within an organization, they are often prevented from advancing to the top because they do not continue to actively network inside and outside their organizations. Wirth explained that networking provides invaluable information, visibility, and support. When more senior positions become vacant, a network typically looks at candidates from its own support circle (Catalyst, 2000; Wirth, 2000). According to the U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, about 48% of all jobs come through personal contacts (Steinem, 1995).

Working hand-in-hand with networking is visibility. Tannen (1994) argued that women are reluctant and fearful to speak up because during childhood, they were trained not to be visible or stand out in their families and communities. Her research found that chief executives stressed the importance of visibility in advancement, so women must use their interpersonal skills in order to be visible enough to be promoted to higher-level positions. According to Wellington and Spence (2001), if women fail to showcase their talents and accomplishments, decision-making leaders in positions of power will fail to think of them for opportunities of promotion.

### *Career Planning*

Another common strategy that has proven to be effective for high achieving women is career planning. According to Catalyst (1998, 2000), lack of career planning is one of the biggest barriers to women's advancement in corporations. Gallagher and Golant (2001) discussed how a successful career requires a personal passion that will motivate an individual to go to work everyday with a mission in mind and a desire to make an impact on the world. Once a woman discovers how to integrate her passion and career, Gallagher and Golant emphasized it takes time for a career plan to unfold and that women must keep their eye on a long-term vision.

In the 1998 treatise entitled *The 48 Laws of Power*, Greene explained Law 29 which focuses on planning a powerful career:

The ending is everything. Plan all the way to it, taking into account all the possible consequences, obstacles, and twists of fortune that might reverse your hard work and give the glory to others. By planning to the end you will not be overwhelmed by circumstances and you will know when to stop. Gently guide fortune and help determine the future by thinking ahead. (p. 236)

Greene posited that applying the laws of power would result in mastery of the social game

and improve one's ability to understand people and navigate one's own path to success.

However, research found that, although improving, most women still have not learned to do career planning appropriately. While men consistently focus on positioning themselves for their next move in their career, women tend to focus on the present and their current performance and do not seek out information pertinent to their future (Gallagher & Golant, 2001). Gloria Steinem (1995) admitted to “a stunning lack of career planning” (p. 189) and suggested that women need the courage plan out their careers. She did acknowledge that this is hard when most women are just trying to keep their heads above water in the present. Steinem insisted that “this does not mean a flat-out imitation of the culturally masculine habit of planning ahead, living in the future, and thus living a deferred life” (pp. 190-191). She pointed out that the ability to live in the present, to tolerate uncertainty, and to remain open are culturally female qualities and that both sides could learn from each other:

If men spent more time raising small children...they would be forced to develop more patience and flexibility. If women had more power in the planning of natural resources and other long-term processes...we would have more sense of controlling the future. (p. 191)

Research by Gallagher and Golant (2001) shows successful women take the time necessary to research fields and organizations of interest thoroughly and choose work specifically aligned with their goals so they can move upward into better jobs, greater responsibility, autonomy, and higher income (see also Catalyst, 2000). Catalyst also found seeking line experience and visible assignments were crucial to positioning a woman for an executive position (see also Oakley, 2000). In addition, successful women make strategic moves in their careers by looking several steps ahead when planning their careers and aim for positions that will ultimately lead them where they want to go in an organization.

Developing an internal and external network can establish connections for future moves on the career path (Catalyst, 2000). Research found that when an organization's culture and leadership will support it, consistent monitoring and reporting on women's progress in the organization is an important way of making this strategy successful (Catalyst; Wirth, 2000).

### *Role Models*

Role models are a factor in career development (Cox, 2004). In her study of 291 women, Cox found that in the upper levels of management, women could identify who they watched as an example of success or advancement in their field. Women leaders before the 1960s reported usually being the only female in their organization's management and having only powerful men as role models. They felt they had to adopt the male model of leadership (Astin & Leland, 1991). According to research by Higbie (2004), "When children see only men in powerful positions, they generalize that only men can be leaders" (p. 78). "Great leading female role models are few and far between" (Friedman & Yorio, 2006, p. 25; see also Mooney, 2005).

Research exposing the lack of visibility of women in the news was compiled by hundreds of observers in 76 countries on February 16, 2005. The researchers conducted a gender analysis of 13,000 news stories as part of the third Global Media Monitoring Project ("How we're doing," 2006). They found that women are mentioned far less often than men in television stories (22% for women versus 78% for men), on the radio (17% vs. 83%), and in print news (21% vs. 79%). Even women's roles in the news are less significant than men's roles. Women are the eyewitnesses in news stories only 30% of the time as opposed to men who are asked 70% of the time. Women are the subject of news stories 23% of the

time, shown to be the expert in a news story 17% of the time, and asked to be the spokesperson 14% of the time. The same research study found that women are far behind men in acquiring positions of power in government too. The numbers of women in elected governmental leadership positions are as follows: world parliaments—16.4%, U.S. Congress—15.1%, and U.S. State Houses—22.8%. It's no wonder that children ask if women can be in leadership positions; there are few women as role models portrayed by the media.

Research by Gulshan (2005) found that women in the computer science industry reported role models to be a significant factor in choosing their career. The survey responses also indicated the relative order of importance of the three factors impacting the women's career choices to be in the following order: (a) parents, (b) role models/mentors, and (c) teachers. Medina (2004) found that interacting with role models, mentors, and influential people was one of the key factors that contributed positively to leaders' professional development experiences.

### *Performance*

It is important to note that all of these success strategies—mentoring, networking, and career planning—largely depend on *performance* to be successful. Successful women who have been interviewed repeatedly stated they concentrated on delivering outstanding work product over and over again. Outstanding performance generates a reputation of credibility that leads to promotions within an organization (Brooks & Brooks, 1999; Estrich, 2001; Higbie, 2004).

In a six year research study conducted at Xerox, Corning, and Tandem Computers, researchers found that 65% of women reported having to work harder than men to get the



same rewards. Only 13% of the men agreed with that observation (Rapoport & Bailyn, 2005).

Catalyst (2001b) surveyed women executives in the US, Canada, and the UK about their top career strategies. They found that 99% of American women in corporate leadership positions consistently exceeded performance expectations. Many studies of both women leaders and CEOs concur with this finding (Mainero, 1994; Morris, 1998; Morrison, 1992; Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998; Sutton & Moore, 1985). Even though women consistently exceeded performance expectations, men tended to evaluate men more positively and women more negatively (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; Frankel, 2004).

Fortunately, mentoring, networking, and career planning are strategies that can be learned over time with consistent practice and patience. In addition to these externally focused strategies, there are success strategies women can use in the workplace that are based on knowing one's internal strengths and values.

### *Internal Strategies*

What are the mental models and theories that underlie and influence how women achieve career success? How do their thoughts and emotions about career success influence the strategies used to achieve success? For her qualitative research on this topic, Awkward (2005) looked at career success to uncover the "inner view" of success, or what happens in the minds of professional women as they prepare to achieve success. She interviewed seventeen professional women, the majority of whom were employed in financial services, telecommunications, and retail industries. All of the study participants were college educated and all but one held a graduate degree.

Awkward (2005) proposed that the inability of individuals to understand their mental models and theories put them at a disadvantage. Mental models are defined as frames of reference for decision making (Mezirow, 1991) and theories, as used in Awkward's research, are defined as tacit, deeply held beliefs which guide one's actions (Argyris & Schon, 1974). Mental models influence the theories in use. Individuals who do not know what their mental models are and the theories that they use in deciding what actions to take are unable to leverage their strengths and minimize their weaknesses; they are ultimately unable to repeat the patterns that led to their previous successes.

Awkward (2005) found that although the women in this study were influenced by American culture and values, and demonstrated career achievement strategies similar to those of men, knowing their personal interests and values enabled them to overcome barriers to success. In addition, Awkward found that "The women in this study disclosed multiple strategies to achieve career success including becoming self-aware of their natural abilities; balancing personal career aspirations and organizational needs; engaging in critical self-reflection; and leveraging the relationship they have with their manager"(p. 100). The principal recommendation resulting from this study was that professional women resembling the study participants would benefit from knowing how their mental models and values influence their approach to career success. Mooney (2005) found "The contradiction between corporate values and feminine values is sharp and can grow as women move up the institutional ladder" (p. 115).

Savage (2002) also advocates that women know themselves, their values and attitudes, as a way of analyzing whether positions above the glass ceiling are right for them. To enjoy a truly satisfying career, women must "recognize that breaking through the real

glass ceiling is a life-changing experience [and] give it the thought it deserves” (p. 50).

### Life Satisfaction

With all the obstacles women have to overcome on their ascent to the top, careers can bring a high degree of stress into women’s lives. However, a successful business career can also bring with it a feeling of accomplishment and other positive rewards. How does this affect the lives of high achieving women?

Donovan, Halpern, and Sargeant (2002) define satisfaction as “a subjective, open measure of human welfare. Subjective because in surveys people are simply asked whether they are satisfied with their life as a whole and open because researchers do not pre-define the components of social welfare—it is up to each individual respondent to judge whether they are satisfied”(pp. 6-7).

Donovan et al. (2002) investigated what made people satisfied with their lives and found a rapidly growing body of research. One key finding was the existence of a “positive relationship between job satisfaction and life satisfaction” (p. 3; see also Burchett, 2006; Levinson, 1996). Donovan et al. cited a range of factors that influence job satisfaction such as personal control, variety, income, job security, skill use, physical security, and job demands. There was a positive correlation between having supportive work colleagues and satisfaction. Additionally, a positive correlation was found between leisure activities, spiritual practices, and life satisfaction. Donovan et al. also found certain personality factors to be related to life satisfaction, i.e. optimism, extroversion, and self-esteem. The findings indicated that women reported more life satisfaction than men. The younger and the older generations reported more life satisfaction than those in middle age. As mentioned earlier, “People with higher incomes are more satisfied than those with lower

incomes, and an increase in personal income does bring higher levels of satisfaction” (p. 2). Levinson (1996) noted that there is a universal human trend that with time it becomes less important to be successful in the eyes of the world and more important to foster an engaged and satisfying relationship with our work.

Gundelach and Kreiner (2004) found that life satisfaction was related to the respondent’s feeling of control. Their work was based on the World Values Survey that used graphical modeling to show a statistical analysis of happiness and life satisfaction. The research found these dimensions were related but were different concepts and that contextual as well as individual variables were important in explaining their variations. In an aggregated analysis, specific variables were analyzed, showing that social capital was the most important predictor of happiness.

Stanhope (1997) cited the work of sociologist Hochschild who found that in recent decades a cultural reversal has occurred, in which the rewards of work have increased relative to those of family life. Many middle-class women came to the workplace in search of power, self-esteem, stimulation and identity. They found these things, but there was a price to pay—an expectation that non-work life would fit around their jobs. Women took on new identities, but the workplace and the men who control it have not evolved, which means many women still have to do the work of their old identity, in addition to their workplace duties, i.e. caregiver and homemaker. Research by Burchett (2006) concurs with the premise that women receive value and non-economic rewards from their jobs. She explained, “While it is clear that some women work because they must due to economic struggles, women at higher-level positions who have obtained an advanced education work for more than the income. Mothers find work offers a means of personal development,

self-esteem and gratification” (p. 39). According to recent study by Catalyst, 67% of women surveyed said they would continue to work in some capacity even if money were not a consideration (Mason, 2002).

Hochschild (1997) found that for white-collar management jobs, the workplace can be a pretty rewarding place. He cited expenses, travel, events, incentives and a feeling of accomplishment, which all contribute to this satisfaction. For many people, there is an overriding sense that work is the real place to be—where real things get done, where one has an important identity. Given the pressures of home life, the lack of appreciation for care giving, and the lack of support from male partners, it is understandable that some women choose to skip the little league game for a budget meeting. They are mirroring the behavior of the generations of absent fathers before them. Kiecolt declared, “It appears that work has become a major source of satisfaction for women, as it is for men” (p. 23). Kiecolt (2003) used multivariate analysis to provide a snapshot of the factors that influence relative work-home satisfaction. The analysis showed that women are progressively more likely to find work a haven instead of having high work-home satisfaction or finding home a haven.

It is important for women to determine whether they really want to join this new culture. Savage (2002) “consider[s] these job elements vital to work satisfaction:

- aligns with your core values
- offers the right level of challenge with a sufficient amount of stretch
- has a corporate culture and environment that you’re comfortable with” (p. 50).

Cox (2004) found that women who reported having mentors were significantly more satisfied with aspects of their careers (such as promotion opportunities, benefits received, and appreciation of their work) than those without mentors.

Sylvia Rimm, renowned psychologist on high achieving women, warned that one of the biggest challenges for the twenty first century is that there may be inadequate numbers of professionally challenging positions, which would frustrate high achievers. She went on to state, “A society that does not provide roles for its gifted citizens has much to lose” (Shaughnessy, 1999, p. 205).

### *Happiness*

Most women want to be happy and fulfilled. According to Rimm, Rimm-Kaufman, and Rimm (1999), most of the 1,000 successful women studied in their research reported having relatively happy childhoods. The women reported living the American dream through their own accomplishments and are choosing to be happy with their career choices. According to Hewlett (2002), “As a large body of research demonstrates, women are happier when they have both career and family” (p. 70). Custer (2005), in his quasi-experimental research on happiness, found overall happiness is influenced directly by satisfaction with life, which is consistent with previous research. According to Barraclough (2000), “The problem seems to be that we expect to be happy. We perceive it as a right, and we feel guilty, inadequate, and resentful if we are not” (p. 519). Many women executives feel a certain angst if they are not experiencing the happiness and fulfillment they thought their career would bring to them.

Executive coach, leadership professor, and author, Vance Caesar (2005) wrote in his latest book, *The High Achiever's Guide to Happiness*, that according to his research, only eight percent of high achievers are happy. Caesar developed a model of seven key success factors that happy high achievers possess that enable them to experience maximum life satisfaction. Keep in mind that 92 % of high achievers do not possess all these critical

factors for success. The key factors are: (a) Purpose—knowing what you are meant to do in your life, (b) Vision—clearly picturing your future with measurable, time specific milestones, (c) Meaningful work—where you get more than you give, (d) Relationships—that give you energy, (e) Beliefs and Behaviors—that give you peace, (f) Review, Renew, and Recommit—reflection that creates rebirth, and (g) Discipline—self-mastery. Happy high achievers display a lot of discipline and live their lives first for themselves so that they can give to others in a way that they end up getting more than they give to each relationship. This in turn creates a life of abundance, in terms they define, which brings them true life satisfaction. A seven factor model may seem easy to accomplish, especially for powerful women who are driven to succeed. However, women climbing the corporate ladder have a myriad of challenges that stand in their way. In addition to the barriers enumerated, the choices women must make in pursuit of satisfaction in life can be very difficult to master.

### *Well-Being Rankings*

In a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal*, Mazurkewich (2004) stated that some researchers are rethinking the value of measuring material wealth without regard to a broader notion of fulfillment. She went on to give the well-being rankings of 81 societies, based on combined “happiness” and “life satisfaction” scores. The United States came in tenth out of 81 countries with a score of 3.5072 out of a possible score of 5.0, as measured by the World Values Survey. These findings now have researchers and think tanks around the world taking note and embracing the concept of promoting a strong national culture of happiness and life satisfaction for its citizens.

Happiness and fulfillment is a fringe field in economics, but some prominent

researchers are giving the notion more attention (Kiecolt, 2003). One is Daniel Kahneman, a psychologist who won the Nobel Prize in economics in 2002; another is Alan Krueger, former chief economist at the U.S. Labor Department. The two are working to come up with a “national well-being account” for the US. Many economists today find measurements of happiness too subjective to carry much meaning. Gross domestic product at least can be measured in cold, hard dollars. One U.S. marketing firm is interested in tweaking the old GDP model to take well-being into account. Diener, a professor of psychology at the University of Illinois, has been asked by the Gallup Organization, to create a national well-being index. Diener recently analyzed more than 150 studies on wealth and happiness, co-publishing a comprehensive report on establishing an economy of well-being. His conclusion on global progress stated that although economic output has risen steeply over the past decades, there has been no rise in life satisfaction. According to Mr. Diener’s report, as societies attain a certain level of wealth, income becomes less of a factor in people’s level of contentment. Well-being is determined not necessarily by your bank account, but by the quality of social relationships, enjoyment at work, job stability, democratic institutions and strong human rights (Mazurkewich, 2004).

Improving the well-being of top executives will spread the benefits of this type of wealth to others in organizations, just as it has done in the nations that have focused on improving well-being rankings in their countries. A feeling of abundance follows well-being. Women have been able to create a sense of well-being in their lives in a substantially different way than men. This is based, in part, on their different style of leading and managing people and organizations.

#### Summary of Chapter Two



This chapter highlighted the relevant literature necessary for a discussion of the research questions regarding high achieving women, the obstacles they face, the strategies they employ to overcome their challenges, and whether this sample of women are satisfied with their life choices on the path to success. The chapter was divided into five subtopics, each with relevance to the study's research questions: (a) History of Women in Business, (b) Leadership and Management Theories, (c) Obstacles to Success, (d) Success Strategies, and (e) Life Satisfaction. This literature informed the research and interview questions and formed the basis for analysis of the data collected during the participant interviews.

A history of women in the American workforce was given, along with a brief on the social construct of feminism and trends in workforce issues. The literature has shown that for the entire history of our country, women have toiled in the workforce, taking on challenges, but always playing second fiddle to men. Collectively, women have worked hard to make changes toward equality by participation in the Women's Movement. This trend has waned over the years as younger women take for granted how hard the battle for equal access has been. Statistics show that even though women make up about half the workforce and hold half the middle management positions, the top executive positions elude them. At the rate of change currently in force, it will take approximately 275 years to reach parity with men in executive positions.

An overview of leadership theory and a comparison of men's and women's leadership styles were given. Research has shown that most men use a traditional, transactional style of leadership, while women use a transformational leadership style that is said to be in keeping with the needs of today's global society. Utilizing more women in senior management can be a competitive advantage for organizations willing to change the

status quo.

Obstacles abound on women's path to the corner office. There are external barriers such as discrimination, stereotyping, tokenism, competition amongst other females, balancing home and work responsibilities, and of course, the glass ceiling. In addition, there are internal barriers to overcome such as the Nice Girl syndrome and the many self-imposed barriers like faulty thinking. Interestingly, men and women disagree about the reality of these obstacles, men believing they do not exist, or at least are not as bad as women perceive them to be.

Some research has been done on the success strategies that women have used to attain executive positions, although not specifically targeted to succeeding in one of the toughest climates in American business, the Fortune 1,000—a hotbed of hierarchical tradition that has dominated management since its inception. The main success strategies that have been identified are education, mentoring, networking, career planning, and exceptional performance. A lack of female role models has been cited as a problem for up-and-coming women; however, when available they are inspiring to women in many ways.

Lastly, a brief overview of life satisfaction was undertaken to facilitate an understanding of this dimension of women's career outlook. Although complex in its construct, life satisfaction can be broken down into three components: fulfillment, happiness, and well-being. Many women executives feel a certain angst if they are not experiencing the happiness and fulfillment they thought their career would bring to them. Sylvia Rimm, renowned psychologist on high achieving women, warned that one of the biggest challenges for the twenty first century is that there may be inadequate numbers of

professionally challenging positions, which would frustrate high achievers. This study seeks to ameliorate that condition.

There is little to be won in a battle between the sexes. But there is much to be gained in the blending of talents and capabilities which elevates everyone—female and male—to a higher standard of performance. By understanding how someone from another generation sees the world, we can make a connection between generations to pass on the wisdom gained from this study. Chapter Three, which follows, describes the framework of this study, giving the details and reasoning behind each.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

*Being extraordinary only takes you so far. Only when women come together do patterns become clear; only by comparing notes do a series of individual decisions become an instance of collective discrimination. It is only by collecting these experiences that individual women, even the most extraordinary, have the opportunity to fulfill their potential.*  
(Estrich, 2001, p.46)

### Introduction

Collecting the experiences of high achieving women and looking for the patterns in those experiences can be accomplished most effectively by a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach. This chapter describes that method and why it was chosen for this study. A discussion of the population and the method of sampling are presented along with a description of the protection of human subjects. Interviewing elites and the data collection strategies are explained, which includes the development of the interview questions and analysis by a panel of experts. The role of the researcher is described and validity and reliability are addressed. Lastly, this chapter presents the method of data analysis and the preparation of the findings.

The purpose of this study was to define the success strategies of high achieving women in the field of business. This entailed determining what obstacles to success these high achieving women have overcome and how success has affected their life satisfaction. The lack of information regarding how successful women have succeeded in the highest ranks of business was documented in the preceding chapter. This chapter explains the methods that were undertaken to fulfill the purpose of this study and to answer the research questions, in essence creating a framework for the research.

### Restatement of the Research Questions

To discover how to overcome the problem of the lack of advancement opportunities for women in senior leadership roles, the first two questions posed were: (a) What are the most common strategies that women leaders report as following to achieve career success? (b) What obstacles to career success do women leaders report as having overcome and how has this been accomplished? To ascertain the level of life satisfaction of this population of high achieving women, this study asked: (c) To what extent has pursuit of career success affected life satisfaction?

### Research Design

According to Roberts (2004), “methodology selection rests primarily on the (1) problem to be investigated, (2) purpose of the study, (3) theory base, and (4) nature of the data” (p. 109). Following is the rationale for choosing a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach as the framework for this feminist research.

### *Feminist Research*

This research study is grounded in part by feminist theory. Patton (2002) posits that “A feminist perspective presumes the importance of gender in human relationships and societal processes and *orients* the study in that direction” (p. 129). This study looks at gender and how societal processes in the corporate business world affect women’s career advancement. Hall and Stevens (1991) state that feminist research has three features: (a) Research questions are designed to reflect the concerns of a group or groups of women; (b) Feminist inquiry is undertaken for the purpose of finding answers for women; and (c) The researcher must disclose her history, assumptions, motives, interests, and interpretations, which will be explicitly scrutinized in the process of the study. This study is being undertaken to answer the questions of women who want to achieve success in their careers.

The researcher has disclosed her biases in the section entitled Statement of Researcher Bias which follows later in this chapter.

According to Renzetti, & Lee, (1993), “the aim of feminist inquiry must be to provide explanations of women’s lives that are useful to them as an instrument to improve their situations” (p. 183). As stated in Chapter One, one of the aims of this research was to provide up-and-coming women with an approach of how to achieve success in their business careers. Renzetti, & Lee, states that feminist research tends to use qualitative methods and in-depth interviews as a method of gathering data. This study involved both.

### *Qualitative Design*

This study used a qualitative research design as the framework to gather the data necessary to answer the research questions. “Qualitative research is the organized, systematic exploration of some portion of human experience. It is not concerned with the statistical interpretation of data, but rather with the discovery of common emergent themes” (Donalek & Soldwisch, 2004, p. 354). A qualitative research design was chosen as the framework for this study because the purpose of the study was to analyze the experiences of high achieving women to search for themes resulting in strategies they have followed and obstacles they have overcome. Creswell (2003) states that in qualitative research the inquirer:

Makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives (i.e., the multiple meanings of individual experiences, meanings socially and historically constructed, with an intent of developing a theory or pattern) or advocacy/participatory perspectives (i.e., political, issue-oriented, collaborative, or change oriented) or both. (p. 18)

This research study involved both constructivist and advocacy perspectives.

Flick (2002) believes that “qualitative research is of specific relevance to the study

of social relations” (p. 2) and that “rapid social change...[is] increasingly confronting social researchers with new social contexts and perspectives” (p. 2). This has forced researchers to use inductive strategies rather than starting from theories and testing them.

Flick also posits that

The goal of research is less to test the already well known...than to discover the new and to develop empirically grounded theories. The object under study is the determining factor for choosing a method and not the other way round. [In qualitative research] objects are not reduced to single variables but are studied in their complexity and entirety in their everyday context...The fields of study are the practices and interactions of the subjects in everyday life. (p. 5)

The purpose of this study was satisfied by the analysis of an in-depth exploration of high achieving women in their everyday surroundings, noting the complexities which were an integral part of their success in the workplace.

Creswell (2003) states that “qualitative research is exploratory and researchers use it to explore a topic when the variables and theory are unknown” (pp. 74-75). Considering the lack of information on how high achieving women have been able to secure high level positions in corporate America, the choice of a qualitative research design was the most appropriate. Morse (1991) states:

Characteristics of a qualitative research problem are: (a) the concept is “immature” due to a conspicuous lack of theory and previous research;...(b) a need exists to explore and describe the phenomena and to develop theory; or (c) the nature of the phenomenon may not be suited to quantitative measures. (p. 120)

The research problem under study had all three of the above characteristics. There has not been a comprehensive theory developed on how women can achieve high level positions in corporate America. This phenomenon needed to be explored to ascertain how high achieving women have succeeded so that this information can be made available as a guide for up-and-coming women in the workforce and for young women who are choosing a

career path. The data necessary to answer the research questions cannot be obtained with quantifiable data.

Creswell (1998, 2003) points out that a qualitative approach allows the researcher room to be innovative and lends itself to the advocacy of issues that relate to marginalized people and creating a better society. Statistics reported in Chapters One and Two show that women are marginalized in the workplace, and that many people feel the inclusion of more women in leadership positions would improve organizations.

Qualitative studies are often divided into two types of research, critical theory and interpretive. Critical theory is used “to understand and critique power within society” and consists of analyzing print materials, popular culture, and social structures (Locke, Silverman, & Spirduso, 2004, p. 149). The purpose of interpretive research is “to understand a situation from the perspective of the participant,” including by observation, examination of documents, and interviews (Locke et al., p. 149). Locke et al. go on to state that “Often, the purpose of interpretive research is to understand the setting for social action from the perspective of the participants” (p. 150). Interpretive research is best suited to understanding the success strategies of high achieving women from their perspective. This type of research also gave a rich understanding of the setting in which these successful women operated, therefore creating a context in which to view the strategies.

In interpretive research, the investigator acts as the primary instrument for data collection, building an extensive collection of thick description consisting of detailed records concerning context, people, actions, and the perceptions of participants. This data collection was the basis for inductive generation of an explanatory theory (Crotty, 1998; Locke et al., 2004). Interpretive research can take many forms. The form of interpretive



research that was used in this study was phenomenology.

### *Phenomenological Approach*

Phenomenology is a philosophic perspective that underlies all qualitative research traditions, but is also a specific approach which examines the meaning of human experiences from the vantage point of someone who has actually experienced that phenomenon (Locke et al., 2004; Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological perspective consists of the belief “that reality exists only in the eyes and minds of beholders” (Locke et al., p. 154). In other words, the strategies of high achieving women and the barriers they face can be constructed only out of an understanding of what high achieving women say the strategies and barriers are. Similarly, to what extent the pursuit of career success has affected the life satisfaction of high achieving women can only be understood from the insights provided by these women.

The phenomenological approach requires the researcher to bracket his or her own experiences in order to understand those of the participants (Locke et al., 2004; Nieswiadomy, 1993). This is addressed in detail in the section entitled Role of the Researcher. Phenomenological research involves studying a small number of subjects and developing patterns and relationships of meaning by analyzing significant statements (Moustakas, 1994). One of the most common research methods of gathering data for this type of study is interviews (Locke et al.). Creswell (2003) advocates collecting “open-ended, emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes from the data” (p. 18-19). Interviews were conducted and are described in detail in the Data Collection section.

### *Sources of Data*

The sources of data for this study were culled from the population described below. These participants were selected by purposive sampling. Every precaution was taken to protect the participants' rights as mandated by Pepperdine University and the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

### *Population*

Patten (2004) states that researchers draw their sample from the population, "which is the group in which we are ultimately interested" (p. 45). The population we were interested in for this study was high achieving women in the corporate business world. For the purpose of this study, high achieving women were defined as women who hold or have held (within the past two years) senior leadership positions in Fortune 1,000 companies. From this population, a sample of 13 participants was invited to participate in interviews. A description of the interview process is found in the section entitled Data Collection.

### *Participant Description*

The sample chosen for this study was comprised of 13 high achieving women who met these criteria: (a) Hold or have held the position level of Vice President or above, (b) Employed by a *Fortune* 1,000 company, and (c) Employed in the qualifying position for a minimum of 1 year within the past 2 years. The study participants were representative of one of the toughest corporate environments – the Fortune 1,000 – one of the most difficult arenas for women to ascend to the top ranks of leadership. "The qualitative researcher seeks participants because of their knowledge of and ability to describe the phenomenon or some part of the phenomenon under study" (Donalek & Soldwisch, 2004, p. 356). The participants were chosen for their ability to describe the strategies they used to break through the glass ceiling. In addition, the participants were selected based on maximum

diversity, where possible, including race, age, and industry. These participants were interviewed to determine the strategies they used to achieve their success and to identify the obstacles they feel they have overcome. In addition, the interview sought to ascertain whether their career success has had an impact on their life satisfaction.

### *Sampling Method*

The method of sampling for this study was purposive, using a strategy of maximum variation. The logic of the sample size is discussed and guidelines are given.

#### *Purposive Sampling*

Patten (2004) states that “when we use this method, we purposively select individuals whom we believe will give us the best information” (p. 51). Since the researcher seeks participants because of their knowledge of and ability to describe the phenomenon, “situational, rather than demographic, representativeness is what is sought” (Horsburgh, 2003, p. 309). Gay and Airasian (2000) state that “In purposive sampling...the researcher selects a sample based on his or her experience or knowledge of the group to be sampled” (p. 138). The power of purposive sampling is the rich information that is learned about issues central to the purpose of the study from a small but knowledgeable sample (Isaac & Michael, 1995; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The sample that was chosen to participate in this study was the best example of the phenomenon of high achieving women, each having attained the highest levels of success in the corporate world. The selections were guided by the literature review and additional research on the women who currently hold the senior executive positions in Fortune 1,000 companies.

During this research, a list of the 20 current women CEOs of the Fortune 1,000 was found in Pink Magazine, a magazine for professional women that showcases women in

business and encourages them to lead (“The Pink List,” 2006). In addition, collaborative research done by Pink Magazine and the Forté Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to increasing the number of women business leaders, identified the women they felt were best-positioned to become the next CEOs of America’s most prestigious companies (Levs, 2006). Along with these two lists, additional potential participants were identified from sources used during the literature review. Background information on each potential participant was culled from company websites, articles, and books. This information was used to ensure maximum variation of the sample.

#### *Maximum Variation Sampling*

This study used a type of purposive sampling termed maximum variation sampling. The researcher began by selecting diverse characteristics for constructing the sample (Isaac & Michael, 1995; Patton, 1987). This strategy is intended to capture the central themes of a particular population. It consists of selecting the most diverse characteristics of the population in order to capture the uniqueness of individual participants and to identify important shared patterns cutting across individual experiences. This method is intended to increase significance because the themes emerge out of heterogeneity (Isaac & Michael; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The criteria for choosing the maximum variation in this study included position title, industry, geographic location, age, ethnicity, educational attainment, marital status, and family composition. These criteria were culled from the literature review as factors having the possibility of accounting for differences in lived experiences.

#### *Sample Size*

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006), “Qualitative inquirers view

sampling processes as dynamic, ad hoc, and phasic rather than static or a priori parameters of populations” (p. 321). They go on to state that there are no statistical rules to determine sample size, only guidelines for purposive sample size. Samples can run anywhere from 1 to 40 or more participants. McMillan and Schumacher posit:

The logic of the sample size is related to the purpose, the research problem, the major data collection strategy, and the availability of information-rich cases. The insights generated from qualitative inquiry depend more on the information richness of the cases and the analytical capabilities of the researcher than on the sample size. (p. 322)

This belief is also shared by Patton (2002) who states, “Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what’s at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources” (p. 244). He also declares, “There are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry” (p. 244).

A small sample size is most appropriate for interviewing strategies (Isaac and Michael, 1995; Patten, 2004), which was the method chosen for this study. The sample size in this study was 13 participants. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) suggest that the obtained sample size be submitted to peer review. This review was under the purview of the study’s doctoral committee.

### *Protection of Human Subjects*

The protection of human subjects is an important ethical consideration. Researchers need to have their research plans reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for their university campus to assess the potential for risk to participants in the study (Creswell, 2003; Gay & Airasian, 2000; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The policy of Pepperdine University (2004) states that

All research involving human participants must be conducted in accordance with accepted ethical, federal, and professional standards for research and that all such

research must be approved by one of the university's Institutional Review Boards.  
(p. 1)

Pepperdine University's policy goes on to say that the IRB is guided by the ethical principles set forth in the Belmont Report which is a statement of basic ethical principles and guidelines that should assist in resolving the ethical problems that surround the conduct of research with human subjects. In addition, research conducted at Pepperdine University will "conform to all other applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations" (p. 1).

As one facet of complying with the IRB guidelines, an informed consent form must be developed for participants to sign before they take part in the research. This form acknowledges that the participant's rights will be protected both during data collection and after. According to Creswell (2002), elements of this form should include the following: (a) the right to participate voluntarily and to withdraw from the study at any time, (b) the purpose of the study and its likely impact on them, (c) the procedures involved in the study, (d) the right to ask questions, obtain a copy of the results, and have their privacy respected, (e) the benefits of the study that will accrue to the participant, and (f) signature of the participant denoting agreement to these provisions. The participant consent form developed for this study included all of the aforementioned elements and appears in Appendix A.

After the proposal was approved by the dissertation committee, an application was filed with the Pepperdine University Institutional Review Board for an exempt review. The exempt review is applicable when the research activities present no more than a minimal risk to human subjects, as was the case in this study.

The researcher completed the Human Participant Protection Education for

Research Teams online course. The certificate of completion is attached in the appendix (see Appendix B, IRB Certificate).

### Data Collection

Data collection began with a thorough review of the literature and is discussed in Chapter Two of the study. The literature informed the creation of the research questions, the interview questions, and the criteria for participant selection. Since the literature discussing the success strategies of high achieving women is limited, interviews of individuals chosen from the population of high achieving women was the data collection strategy chosen because it would provide a rich description of the phenomenon. A semi-structured approach was the method used for questioning in the participant interviews. Qualitative researchers use open-ended questions to allow participants to express their views (Crotty, 1998; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Isaac and Michael (1995) give the advantages of interviewing as permits greater depth, allows for probing to obtain more complete data, establishes a rapport with participant, and provides a means to check the effectiveness of communication during the interview. Isaac and Michael list the disadvantages of interviews as being time-consuming, costly, and inconvenient. The following section will describe the entire interview process.

### *Interview Process*

The interview process started with the researcher contacting participants who met the criteria previously discussed. Contact was made by phone and/or email. Once interest in participating in the study was confirmed, a Participant Consent Form (see Appendix A) was sent to the participant for her signature. Once on file, an interview time and location was arranged. Interviews lasted approximately one hour and were scheduled at the

convenience of the participant. The interviews took place at the participant's choice of location or were conducted by telephone. A complete list of interview questions (see Interview Protocol, Appendix C) was given to each participant before the interview. To ensure complete accuracy of the interview, it was tape recorded (when permission was granted) and notes were taken. If the participant did not want the interview tape recorded, then only handwritten notes were taken. In the weeks following the interview, a transcript was made and a copy sent to the participant for her review. At this time, she was able to correct, clarify, and verify the discussion.

The Interview Protocol (Appendix C), details the steps that were taken during the interview. The protocol was formatted with spaces after each question to write answers or take notes for both the interviewee and the researcher. The researcher brought copies of the protocol to each interview. As described in the protocol, the first step states that the purpose of the study will be described and the interviewee will be thanked for agreeing to participate. Then, the researcher will explain the interview process, tape recording, note taking, and confidentiality. Next, the researcher will inquire if the participant has any questions. Demographic information will be taken including age, race, marital status, children (number and ages), number of hours worked per week, education level of both the interviewee and her parents, and the interviewee's early economic status. Next, the researcher will proceed to ask each of the 14 interview questions. This protocol was followed for each interview.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006), good qualitative interviewing technique includes establishing trust, being genuine, maintaining eye contact, using a conversational tone, and showing that the researcher hears and connects with the



participant. As recommended by Salas (2005), during the interview, the researcher practiced good listening skills. The researcher avoided interrupting the participants and was prepared for potential emotional outbursts. “The interviewer will not show any emotions such as expressions of surprise or approval and will not ask leading questions” (Salas, p. 185). Open-ended follow-up questions such as “could you explain” or “could you give an example” were asked. During the interview, the researcher was interactive, emotionally neutral, and cognitively sophisticated, as recommended by McMillan and Schumacher.

To close the interview, the researcher asked, “Is there anything you would like to add?” The researcher assured the participant of confidentiality, if requested, and reminded her about the participant check of the transcript in the following weeks. Lastly, the researcher thanked the interviewee for her time and participation and gave her a business card, in case she wanted to add additional information to her interview. Within a week, a formal thank you letter was sent to each participant.

### *Interviewing Elites*

Interviewing elites could present specific challenges to the researcher. Odendahl & Shaw (2002) define elites as having more money, prestige, and knowledge than most people. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) note that elites are “considered to be influential, prominent, and well informed in an organization” (p. 352). Elites prefer an active role in the interview, responding well to “broad areas of content and to provocative, intelligent questions that allow them freedom to use their knowledge” (McMillan and Schumacher, p. 352).

Gaining access to elites is often a problem for researchers (McMillan and

Schumacher, 2006; Odendahl & Shaw, 2002). Getting past the elites' gatekeepers, personal assistants, lawyers, and advisors can be minimized by relying on sponsorship, recommendations, and introductions to obtain appointments (McMillan and Schumacher; Odendahl & Shaw). This technique was used whenever possible to gain access to the chosen participants. Scheduling interviews with elites was difficult due to their busy schedule. For this reason, the researcher accepted the time and location as directed by the participant's wishes. The interviewer was aware of potential distractions such as interruptions during the interview to conduct business or excessive wait times due to dynamics in the life of the elite. The researcher made the most of the allotted time with the elite subject. To expedite the interview, the researcher provided the interview questions in advance which allowed the participant to prepare (Odendahl & Shaw, 2002).

Odendahl and Shaw (2002) posit that elites have several things in common. They tend to question researchers' credentials and background. Social status is important to them. To address this, the researcher offered her curriculum vitae to the participants so they would have an understanding of her background in business and research. Relationship development during the interview process was important. Establishing a rapport with participants in the beginning stages helped ease any qualms they had. Elites want to know their time and effort is valuable. The potential benefits of this research were communicated to the participants prior to the interview. Confidentiality can be especially important to elites. When requested, participants' identities were disguised by the use of an alternative designation (P1, P2, etc.). In addition, company names were disguised or eliminated. Ensuring the confidentiality of their information allowed the participants to answer the interview questions more freely, therefore producing a richer study.

### *Confidentiality*

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006), “Researchers have a dual responsibility: to protect the individuals’ confidences from other persons in the setting and to protect the informants from the general reading public” (p. 334). They go on to state that “The settings and participants should not be identifiable in print” (p. 334). Confidentiality will be maintained as requested by not using the participants’ real names or company names. The researcher will not divulge the participants’ names or identities to anyone. To maintain confidentiality, the researcher removed the participants’ names from the records as recommended (Flick, 2005; Gay & Airasian, 2000; McMillan & Schumacher). Participants will be referred to by the moniker Participant 1 (P1), Participant 2 (P2), and so forth, following the order of their interviews. In addition, company names will be disguised by referring to them by industry only (e.g., a large aerospace manufacturer), unless permission was granted for exposure.

### *Recording and Transcription of Interviews*

As previously mentioned, when permission was granted, the interview was tape recorded. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006), this “ensures completeness of the verbal interaction and provides material for reliability checks” (p. 355). Two tape recorders were used for each interview, one serving as a backup to ensure all data was captured. The researcher had on hand a supply of extra batteries and tapes to prevent any delay in data collection. In addition, the researcher took notes during the interview to clarify the spoken words. McMillan and Schumacher believe note taking is important to facilitate data analysis. Interviewer recording forced the interviewer to be attentive, helped to pace the interview, and began the data analysis process.

After each interview, the tape recordings were transcribed to produce a verbatim transcript that was then sent to each interviewee for correction, clarification, and verification of the discussion. Flick (2005) states that “transcription is a necessary step on the way to [data] interpretation” (p. 171). While there is no standard for attaining exactness, it is “reasonable to transcribe only as much and only as exactly as is required by the research question[s]” (Flick, p. 171-172). The researcher understood this to mean that it was acceptable to delete such nonessential language as *umms* and *uhs*. Words such as these can be embarrassing and distracting to elites as they try to verify the transcripts (F. Amin, personal communication, October 2, 2005). What is essential during transcription, according to McMillan and Schumacher (2006), is to use the participant’s language and not abstract social science terms. This is important so that “direct quotations from the data [can be used to] illustrate participants’ meanings and thus ensure validity” (McMillan & Schumacher, p. 325). Flick advocates checking the transcript against the recording and unidentifying names and companies. The researcher requested that participants return the reviewed transcripts to her within one week from the date they received them. The tape recordings and transcripts are being kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s home office for a period of five years, after which time they will be destroyed.

#### *Validity of the Interview Protocol*

To ensure the validity of the interview questions, a panel of experts was used. Their task was “to provide unbiased information as a means of ascertaining comprehensibility” (Hyatt, 2003, p. 80). The interview questions developed for this study were reviewed by a panel of experts consisting of three persons, each holding doctoral degrees, and experienced with both research methods and the subject matter. After a positive response

to an initial invitation (see Appendix D, Invitation Letter), a second letter (see Appendix E, Expert Panel Letter) was sent to each panel member thanking them for their willingness to participate in the validation of the interview questions. Included with the letter was a list of the research and interview questions (see Appendix F, Interview Questions for Expert Panel) and a review form on which they could rate each question (see Appendix G, Expert Panel Review Form). Chapter One of this study was also sent to the panel members to provide the purpose of the study and background information. After receiving feedback from all panel members, the interview questions were revised to incorporate their suggestions (see Appendix H, Interview Questions for Participants).

The Panel of Experts consisted of Dr. Helen S. Astin, Ph.D., Dr. Lois P. Frankel, Ph.D., and Dr. Diana P. Salas, Ed.D. All three experts brought to this study years of experience as researchers and as subject matter experts on the various facets of high achieving women.

Dr. Helen S. Astin, Ph.D., a psychologist, is Professor Emeritus in the Graduate School of Education at UCLA and a Senior Scholar at the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). Her research interests include education and career development of women, leadership, and the meaning of work in women's lives. Dr. Astin has published numerous articles and eleven books, most notably *Women of Influence*, *Women of Vision: A Cross-Generational Study of Leaders and Social Change* (1991), which Warren Bennis has called "the single best book on women and leadership" (Leland, 2005, p. 1). Dr. Astin has served as a member of the board of the National Council for Research on Women and as a member of the Committee on Women's Employment and Related Social Issues of the National Research Council. She has been president of the Division of the Psychology of

Women of the American Psychological Association. Before coming to UCLA, she was director of research and education for the University Research Corporation in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Lois P. Frankel, Ph.D. is President of Corporate Coaching International, specializing in leadership, teambuilding, and women in the workplace. Two decades as a business coach and human resources professional have contributed to Dr. Frankel's reputation as a sought-after public speaker. She is among the top names of international speakers featured on TV, radio, and AOL.com. Dr. Frankel is the author of *Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office* (2004), a book on coaching women to succeed in businesses large and small around the globe. This international bestseller has been translated into seven languages and Forbes has named it one of the top ten business books of 2004.

Dr. Diana P. Salas, Ed.D. is presently the 2nd Vice President of the City of Los Angeles Affirmative Action Association for Women. Her doctorate is in Organizational Leadership from Pepperdine University. For her dissertation research entitled *The Operative Paradigm of Hispanic-American Women Business Leaders: A Narrative, Qualitative Study*, Dr. Salas interviewed 20 women business leaders to document the contributions they have made. Dr. Salas currently works as an Electrical Engineering Associate for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, specializing in specifications. She has degrees in business management, business administration and electrical engineering. Dr. Salas is soon to receive her Certified Purchasing Manager's certification. She has published various articles on women's issues and health care and is currently writing three books on leadership, geared to young girls, teens and young women, and established women to help them become successful in business.

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest using colleagues “who can supply alternative perspectives, support, and protection from bias and self-delusion” (p. 46). The feedback received from the Panel of Experts was very positive in its support of both the research in general and the interview questions specifically. All experts stated that the proposed interview questions were valid, although minor wording changes were suggested and in a few instances, additional explanation was deemed necessary to request from the participants.

Two additional questions were proposed and added (Q9). In what ways did your upbringing and socialization present a challenge in achieving your career success? and Q12. In what ways has your career enhanced your life satisfaction?). In suggesting new question number nine (Q9), the expert said in her experience “there are things women do to hold themselves back separate and apart from external obstacles” (L. P. Frankel, personal communication, February 3, 2006). This is in keeping with the literature presented in Chapter Two and therefore the question was added. This alternative perspective will improve the scope of the data gathered from the interviews. The same line of reasoning was followed in adding new question Q12, with the expert alluding to the fact that the proposed interview questions seemed to be leading participants to only negative responses. Positive impacts to life satisfaction from career success were documented in Chapter Two and therefore Q12 was added. The original question six (What strategies have you used to attain your success?) was moved ahead of the questions asking about mentors, role models, and support so as not to “prime them to say role models, mentors, and supporters” (L. P. Frankel, personal communication, February 3, 2006).

Last, it was pointed out that some demographic data would be helpful in analyzing

the trends and comparing with the literature. As such, an inquiry will be made as to the participant's age, race, position title, hours worked per week, current industry, education level, parent's education level, and early economic status. On the committee's recommendation, some of the interview questions were combined in order to ensure an interview time of 1 hour, as proposed to the elite participants. The modified interview questions can be found in Appendix E, Interview Questions for Participants.

### Validity and Reliability of the Study

Morse and Richards (2002) state that determining validity and reliability are essential to good qualitative research. Validity requires that the results accurately reflect the phenomenon studied (Flick, 2002; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

"Reliability...refers to the results of the study being consistent with the data collected....Replication of a qualitative study may not produce the same interpretations of the data, but that fact does not discredit the findings of the study" (Clark, 2005, p. 67). Other understandings of reliability, such as repeated data collection leading to the same results, should be rejected because it leads to mistrust of the dependability of the data (Flick). Morse and Richards acknowledge there has been much discussion in the research community regarding whether these terms are applicable to qualitative studies, but are still convinced that validity and reliability are the goal of qualitative research (see also Creswell, 2003; Kvale, 1989; Maxwell, 1992; Sparkes, 2001).

Flick (2002) posits, "The problem of how to assess qualitative research has not yet been solved" (p. 218). Facets of grounding qualitative research include the following:

- What criteria should be used to assess the procedure and results?
- What degree of generalization of the results can be obtained?



- How does one present procedures and results? (Flick, p. 219)

The first way to address these issues is to apply the classical criteria of validity and reliability, and to reformulate them as necessary for qualitative research. Second, the use of new method-appropriate criteria which take into account the peculiarities of qualitative research should be employed (Flick).

### *Validity*

Creswell (2003) notes that validity “is seen as a strength of qualitative research” (p. 195) and can also be referred to by these terms: trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility. “Claims of validity rest on data collection and analysis techniques” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p. 324). The following recommended strategies for assuring the validity of a qualitative study will be followed during this research (Creswell; McMillan & Schumacher):

1. *Triangulate* data from different sources. Information was examined from the literature review, artifacts such as data on Fortune 1,000 companies, and interviews with women executives.
2. Use *member-checking* to determine the accuracy of the data. The transcripts were given back to the participants for their review and determination of accuracy.
3. Use *rich, thick description* to convey the findings and give the discussion an element of shared experiences. This was done in Chapter Four by using many verbatim quotes from the participants and comments from the researcher’s field notes.
4. Clarify the *bias* the researcher brings to the study. This self-reflection is found

in the section entitled Statement of Researcher Bias.

5. Present *negative or discrepant information* that runs counter to the themes.

Negative and discrepant information was shared in the findings of Chapter Four, adding to credibility for the reader.

6. Use *peer debriefing* to enhance the accuracy of the account. Two colleagues served as interraters to analyze the interview transcripts.

7. Use an *external auditor* to review the entire project. Several persons have served as readers to assess the project at various stages of the research.

### *Ecological Validity*

Ecological validity, introduced by Brunswick in 1955, advocates the use of study participants and settings that are representative of the real world (as cited in Meltzoff, 1998). The study participants were representative of one of the toughest corporate environments—the Fortune 1,000—one of the most difficult arenas for women to ascend to the top ranks of leadership. The participants, by meeting the criteria for selection, represented the high achieving women whose strategies the researcher was working to identify.

### *External Validity*

External validity, according to Meltzoff (1998), is “the demonstrated validity of the generalizations that the researcher intended at the outset and the validity of the generalized inferences that the researcher offers at the end” (p. 46). Meltzoff states that “external validity is bounded by intent and by claims” (p. 45) and goes on to assert that researchers must furnish grounds for generalizability. “The key to generalizability is whether the study can be reproduced or was a one-shot phenomenon” (Meltzoff, p. 47). Meltzoff summarizes

the main aspects of generalizability as follows:

1. Do the results apply to people who were not research participants but who share the same subclass memberships as the participants? Do they apply to people who belong to other subclasses as well?
2. Would the same results be obtained with a different researcher or rater?
3. Would the same results be obtained if the study were conducted in a different environment, place, or setting? Would it generalize to other geographic locations?
4. Is there temporal generalizability? Are the results time bound?
5. Would the same results be obtained with different methods of measurement?  
Are the results generalizable beyond the specifics used in this study?

To address concerns for the external validity of this research, the claims of significance and generalizability noted in Chapter One and the discussion of the findings in Chapter Five were linked. The discussion addressed whether the strategies found apply to other women in business and to other minorities. It is predicted that the same results would be attained if the study were replicated following the procedures described in Chapter Three. It is harder to project whether the same results would occur if the study were carried out in the nonprofit environment or in academia because these fields may have their own path to the top that is different from that used in the corporate world. The results may generalize to other geographic locations (for example, to some progressive countries in the European Union), but perhaps not to those locations where the culture is less inclusive and more male centric than in the United States (for example, countries in the Middle East). The results would be time bound only in cases of social change more rapid than the current

rate. The climate for acceptance of women leaders has changed so slowly in the US that the findings of this study are expected to be relevant well into the future. Similar results may be possible using a survey instrument instead of the planned interview process; however, the rich, thick description of the data would not be available from which more conclusions can be drawn. The results will be generalizable beyond the specifics of this study because even women who do not want to break through the glass ceiling to the executive suite can use the findings to gain more success in the workplace.

### *Rigor*

Hall and Stevens (1991) describe the quest for rigor as the following: “Verifying the scientific adequacy of feminist studies is necessary to assure that research processes and outcomes are well grounded, cogent, justifiable, and relevant” (p. 1). Establishing rigor in qualitative research can be done by addressing *credibility* (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). A study is credible when it presents truthful descriptions and interpretations of the human experience. This study used two processes for establishing credibility, auditability and dependability.

*Auditability.* One way of demonstrating credibility is accomplished by *auditability*. A study is auditable when other researchers can accurately follow the decision trail used by the investigator and can arrive at the same conclusions, given the researcher’s data (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The researcher must describe and justify the steps in the decision trail in a logical order (Webb, 1992). Chapter Three systematically lays out a description of the decision trail that another researcher could follow to recreate this study and therefore demonstrate the credibility of the research.

*Dependability.* Hall and Stevens (1991) describe the process of *dependability* as a

means of establishing credibility by utilizing processes that are consistent and true to the context studied. Another term for this measure of rigor is reflexivity. According to Webb (1992), reflexivity “requires researchers to reflect continuously throughout the research on their actions, respondents’ reactions to them, how they are collecting data, what they are observing and hearing, and how they are making interpretations” (p. 750). These reflections must be accessible to the reader to aid in their evaluation of the research. More information on reflexivity and how the reflections of this researcher illuminate possible bias in the study appears in the section entitled The Role of the Researcher.

### *Reliability*

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), reliability in qualitative research is defined by dependability and consistency of the findings relating to the data collected. Flick (2002) states that reliability in qualitative research comes down to the need for the explication of two aspects, (a) the genesis of data—separating the participants’ statements from the researcher’s interpretation and (a) procedures in the field and in handling the text—explicating the interview process and data analysis process. According to Flick, “The reliability of the whole process will be increased by documenting it” (p. 221). This Chapter Three documents the processes and procedures that will be used in this qualitative study. Chapter Four clearly labels the participants’ statements as different from the researcher’s interpretation (found in Chapter Five), thus increasing the reliability of the research. Another method that was employed to ensure reliability was the use of two interraters during the coding and data analysis phase. This is described in more detail in the section entitled Interraters.

### *Role of the Researcher*

Horsburgh (2003) states that “qualitative research usually operates from the premise that total detachment on the part of the researcher is unattainable...and that the individual who carries out research comprises an integral component of the entire process and product” (p. 308). The primary role of the researcher in this study was to serve as an investigator whose objective was to seek information regarding the success strategies, obstacles, and life satisfaction of high achieving women. The researcher was an active participant in the interviewing relationship and the interpretation of the resulting data. As such, trustworthiness of the data in interpretive research was a vital issue (Creswell, 2003; Horsburgh; Locke et al., 2004; Pyrczak & Bruce, 2003). Trustworthiness can be accomplished by reflexivity.

### *Reflexivity*

Reflexivity is the “acknowledgement by the researcher that her/his own actions and decisions will inevitably impact upon the meaning and context of the experience under investigation” (Horsburgh, 2003, p. 308). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006), “Reflexivity is an important procedure for establishing credibility” (p. 327). Reflexivity can be demonstrated by acceptance of the self as integral to the research enterprise, which should be evidenced by clear explication of the research process and product (Koch & Harrington, 1998; McMillan & Schumacher; Webb, 1992, 1996). De Groot (1988) states that in qualitative research, the researcher’s personal beliefs and values do enter into the process throughout, in the choice of subjects to study, the research questions she decides to pursue, the method of data collection and analysis used, and the interpretations made. Koch and Harrington continue this thinking as evidenced by their statement:

We contend that researchers bring to the research product, data generated, a range of literature, a positioning of this literature, a positioning of oneself, and moral

socio-political contexts. We suggest that reflexive research [be] characterized by ongoing self-critique and self-appraisal. (p. 1)

“In interpretive work, no research is free of the biases, assumptions, and personality of the researcher. We cannot separate self from those activities in which we are intimately involved” (Sword, 1999, p. 277). To identify possible sources of researcher bias, the researcher has created the following statement of her personal biases.

*Statement of Researcher Bias*

The researcher must make clear her or his personal biases and investments in the project (Creswell, 2003; Locke et al., 2004; Nieswiadomy, 1993). The researcher has come to this project as a result of her own experiences in business. This has shaped her perspective on opportunities for career advancement, obstacles that impede progress, her own definition of life satisfaction and the relationship it has to career success. For the researcher, defining the success strategies of high achieving women was a passionate cause which inspired and motivated this study. The researcher was also very curious as to whether the high achieving women interviewed for this study would report that career success had an impact on their satisfaction with life. The researcher also saw this project as aligned with her personal mission in life to help others with the skills she has been given and the knowledge she possesses. Developing a knowledge base in this field would provide useful information to share with many generations of women.

The researcher was aware of the fact that her experiences might influence her perceptions and the researcher tried to eliminate their impact on the interpretation of the findings using the following techniques. To mitigate researcher bias, the researcher developed Pareto charts to track the frequency of themes, ensured accuracy with the assistance of two interraters, and ensured robustness by examining and reexamining the

data and mentioning anomalies in the information. In addition, the researcher used a Panel of Experts to review the interview questions. One of the changes suggested by the reviewers was proposed because it was found that the researcher's original questions about life satisfaction presumed career success had a negative effect on the participants. To balance the interview data, it was suggested that the researcher add Question 12 - In what ways has your career enhanced your life satisfaction? This is a good example of the procedures that are in place to counteract any researcher bias that may occur.

### *Verstehen*

Instead of performing data collection, Webb (1992) believes that the term *data selection* may be more appropriate "because the type of data and how they are used are matters of personal choice on the part of researchers" (p. 749). The meanings, shared assumptions, and definitions that come out of the data collection process can be identified and understood by means of *verstehen*, the process of empathizing with those being studied. During this interpretive research process, the researcher invested and divulged much of herself in the research. In research encounters, the participants made judgments about the researcher's background, motives, intentions, and beliefs. They then responded as they judged appropriate. This interpersonal aspect, the process of mutual *verstehen* cannot be ignored (Webb). This researcher was aware of the interpersonal aspect involved in a successful interview process and was attuned to the relational needs involved.

### Data Analysis

"Qualitative data analysis is...an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns...among the categories" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p. 364). Inductive analysis is an ongoing, cyclical process that involves interim



analysis, coding, categorizing, and interpreting data to provide explanations of a phenomenon of interest. Through the process of inductive analysis, categories and patterns emerge from the data (McMillan & Schumacher). Identifying and describing the themes and patterns must come from the perspective of the participants (Agar, 1980 as cited in Creswell, 2003). Since there is no standard set of procedures for data analysis, “making sense of the data depends largely on the researcher’s intellectual rigor and tolerance for tentativeness of interpretation until the entire analysis is completed” (McMillan & Schumacher, p. 364). The process of data analysis included data reduction and then data display.

### *Data Reduction*

To begin the data reduction process, the phenomenological perspective must be considered. “Phenomenology is an approach that enables the researcher to understand the meaning of phenomena” (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 146). It is not a linear process, but an iterative one. The researcher must transform the lived experience into a textual expression of its essence. This research study followed Giorgi’s (1997) five basic steps to arrive at essence:

1. collection of verbal data
2. reading the data
3. breaking data into parts
4. organization and expression of data from a disciplinary perspective
5. synthesis and summary of data for communication to the scholarly community

The collection of verbal data consisted of the verbatim transcripts made from the tape recorded interviews. As recommended by McMillan and Schumacher (2006), interim

analysis was done during the data collection phase and consisted of field notes and reflections. The researcher was looking for recurring ideas or meanings that could become topics. The researcher then read each transcript several times to get a sense of the whole phenomenon.

Two interraters were used to establish reliability for the coding and analysis process. They were each given the same transcripts and while reading them, they identified meaning units by coding the transcripts line by line. Meaning units can be single words or short phrases which are relevant to the research topic (Flick, 2002). This was done independently and then a comparison of the outcomes was discussed. Where a discrepancy existed, the researcher and interraters used the context of the interview, and a discussion surrounding the meaning unit, to obtain agreement. The researcher compiled the analysis, listing the meaning units, comparing for duplication, and clustering them into topics. The themes, or topics, identified during the content analysis were prepared in table form. Then each transcript and table was reread by all three researchers for clarification of the themes by identifying meaning units relating to the corresponding themes (Clark, 2005). Disagreements were handled as previously mentioned, with a discussion and majority vote.

The researcher developed categories from the themes chosen by the group. Categories are more general and abstract and represent the meaning of similar themes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The ultimate goal of qualitative research, according to McMillan and Schumacher, “is to make general statements about relationships among categories by discovering patterns in the data” (p. 373). To accomplish this, the researcher conducted a thorough search of the data, moving through the various levels of coding, in an effort to determine which data are central to the research problem. The process is circular,

with the researcher returning to the data many times. The major patterns served as the framework for reporting the research findings (McMillan & Schumacher).

#### *Interraters*

Two interraters were used to establish reliability. Dr. Fereshteh Amin and Ms. Clare Berger agreed to participate in this capacity. Both women are experienced researchers and are skilled at analyzing qualitative research.

Dr. Fereshteh Amin, Ed.D. completed her doctoral studies in Organizational Leadership from Pepperdine University. Her dissertation research focused on the success strategies of Iranian American leaders. This qualitative study analyzed interviews with successful Iranian American leaders to conclude themes of leadership characteristics and challenges they faced. Dr. Amin is currently involved in leadership training and coaching. She has over seven years of experience in organizational development and has conducted research on organizational behavior and change management. Her research interests revolve around a comparative study of American, Middle Eastern, and Asian leadership approaches, personal leadership and women in leadership. Dr. Amin has published research on women and leadership. She currently serves as a board member for the Professional Coaches and Mentors Association in Los Angeles.

Ms. Clare Berger is in the process of completing an Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership at Pepperdine University. Ms. Berger received her B.A. from the University of California, Irvine, in Social Ecology and holds an MBA from Pepperdine University. Ms. Berger is currently employed in the government sector and has over 15 years of professional experience in the private sector in a variety of environments, including leadership and management in administration, operations, legal, marketing, and customer

service. She is currently working on a qualitative study on the leadership characteristics of winners of the Nobel Peace Prize.

### *Data Display*

The data was displayed with both text and figures. Visual representations allow the researcher to balance the complexity of the material with the need to simplify for analytical and communication purposes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The data was presented according to the research questions and the corresponding interview questions. The themes associated with each question were identified and discussed using verbatim excerpts from the interviews as illustration. The confidentiality requirement dictates that participants were identified other than by name. This study refers to the participants as P1 through P13. Pareto charts for each research question were used to display the summary of themes identified and the frequency of participant responses. In addition, a summary table was produced showing all themes identified. The data display is found in Chapter Four.

### *Summary of Chapter Three*

Chapter Three started with an introduction that provided a roadmap to the chapter and stated that the best research design for the stated purpose of this study is a qualitative design using a phenomenological approach. The research questions were restated and a discussion followed which defined qualitative research as the exploration of some portion of human experience. This section went on to explain why a qualitative research design was the best choice to discover the success strategies and obstacles faced by high achieving women. Next, the specific approach of phenomenology was explained which examines the meaning of human experiences from the vantage point of someone who has actually experienced that phenomenon. The population was described as women executives in

Fortune 1,000 companies and who have held the position level of Vice President or above in a Fortune 1,000 company for a minimum of one year. The method of purposive sampling with a maximum variation strategy was explained. The protection of human subjects was an important ethical consideration in data collection. This section included considerations and review by the IRB.

The process of data collection through semi-structured interviews was detailed. Validity and reliability were discussed, including the contribution of the Panel of Experts. Next, the role of the researcher was detailed, including a statement of researcher bias. Lastly, a discussion of the data analysis process explained data reduction and the use of two interraters to ensure reliability of the results of coding the interview transcripts. The chapter ended with a look at data display which appears as the findings in Chapter Four.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

*at some point in her career, every woman has needed  
another woman... to be a role model without ever knowing it.*

*at some point in her career, every woman should tell her story.  
not for her, but for another woman not so different from herself.*

*Change begins with understanding.  
Understanding begins with conversation.*  
(PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2006, pp. 6-7)

### Introduction

The women interviewed for this study have told their stories in an effort to help other women. It is hoped that the information that comes from these conversations will help to create understanding and change. The purpose of this study was to define the success strategies of high achieving women in the field of business. This included determining what obstacles to success these high achieving women have overcome and how success has affected their life satisfaction. This chapter presents the results of the study including a brief profile of the participants. The data collected from the semi-structured interviews have been analyzed and the findings follow.

### Profile of the Participants

Thirteen participants were interviewed for this study. The study participants were all from one of the toughest corporate environments – the Fortune 500 – one of the most difficult arenas for women to ascend to the top ranks of leadership. In fact, six were from Fortune 50 companies and a seventh was from a Fortune 100 company. For the purpose of this study, high achieving women were defined as women who hold or have held (for at least one year within the past two years) Vice President level positions or above in Fortune 1,000 companies. The method of sampling was purposive, using a strategy of maximum

variation. The criteria for choosing maximum variation in this study included industry, position title, geographic location, age, ethnicity, educational attainment, marital status, and family composition. Confidentiality was promised to all participants who requested it.

The 13 participants represented 11 different industries. They held titles ranging from Vice President to CEO. Of the participants, 8 were from the West Coast, 1 was from the Midwest, and 4 were from the East Coast. The participant's ages ranged from the youngest at 36 to the eldest at 56, with an average age of 46. Participants stated their ethnicity as follows: 9 Caucasian, 3 African American, and 1 Hispanic. For educational attainment, 1 participant held a Juris Doctorate, 7 held Master's degrees (with 2 holding multiple Master's), 4 held a Bachelor's degree, and 1 had taken some college classes. As for marital status, 9 participants were currently married, 3 were single, and 1 was divorced. Of the participants, 10 had children and 3 did not. Among the participants, 10 had parents with some level of college education and 3 had parents with no college education. The participants described their early economic status as follows: 3 chose upper middle class, 4 chose middle class, 4 chose lower middle class, and 2 chose lower class. The amount of hours participants estimated they worked in a typical week ranged from the lowest number of 43 to the highest of 70 with an average of 56 hours per week, not including travel which most reported doing extensively. Tables 1 and 2 show the demographics of the women participants.

### Data Collection

Data collection was primarily conducted with a set of semi-structured interview questions which were finalized after modification and validation by the panel of experts (see Chapter Three).

Table 3

*Participant Demographics by Industry and Title*

Industry (alphabetical order)	Number of Participants
Aerospace	1
Apparel	1
Automotive	1
Banking	2
Financial	1
Forest Products	1
Hotel	1
Information Technology	1
Insurance	1
Telecommunications	2
Title and Escrow	1
Title	Number of Participants
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	1
President	2
Executive Vice President	1
Senior Vice President	2
General Counsel	1
Managing Director	1
Vice President	7

*Note.* Some participants hold more than one title.



Table 4

*Participant Demographics by Age, Hours Worked, and Educational Attainment*

Participant Age	Number of Participants
30 to 39 years	2
40 to 49 years	7
50 to 59 years	4
Number of Hours Worked per Week (exclusive of travel)	Number of Participants
40 to 44	1
45 to 49	1
50 to 54	2
55 to 59	5
60 to 64	2
65 to 69	1
70 to 74	1
Highest Education Level Attained	Number of Participants
Doctorate (includes Juris Doctorate)	1
Masters	9
Baccalaureate	4
Some college classes	1

*Note.* Some participants hold more than one Master's degree.

Names of high achieving women were researched from articles in the business press and *Fortune* 1,000 Web sites. Once approval was obtained from Pepperdine University's IRB,

initial telephone calls and e-mail were sent to potential participants to inform them of the study and request their participation. Many of those women (196 women executives) meeting the criteria set forth in Chapter Three were contacted and invited to participate. Approximately one third of the women (30.6%) invited to participate responded to the invitation. Reasons given for non participation either by themselves directly or through an assistant stated they were too busy, did not do this kind of interview, or had already done many of this type of interview and could not schedule another at this time. It is interesting to note that the final 13 participants who consented to an interview were those initially contacted by others on behalf of the researcher. For this study, it was imperative to have a personal connection to secure an interview with a participant. In some cases it took multiple connections to access a potential interviewee. However, an introduction by a trusted third party did not translate into an agreement of participation in all cases. This data collection process took seven and one half months to complete the 13 interviews. A fourteenth participant had agreed to an interview but due to scheduling conflicts with her work, was ultimately unable to participate.

Of the 13 participants, 12 gave permission for their interview to be tape recorded. Notes were taken during all 13 interviews. In addition to the scripted interview questions, probing questions were used to clarify and elaborate as needed. Transcriptions were reviewed for accuracy against the interview tapes and then sent to each participant for their review and corroboration. The interviewees were given a week to review the transcripts and request any changes. They were told non response was to be considered default approval. Of the 13 interviewees, 12 responded in some way, with 6 asking for some changes for clarification. Of the 13 interviews, 6 were conducted in person and 7

conducted by phone by request of the participant or because the amount of travel required. The researcher did fly to some locations to interview the participants. Arranging an interview around the hectic travel and meeting schedules of high achieving women was a significant challenge, one that was overcome with patience and flexibility by both parties. All interviews were conducted in one sitting. While a 1 hour time slot was initially requested, sometimes an executive was delayed by business circumstances and the interview started up to 20 minutes late. The interview was almost always halted at the original time scheduled to allow the executive to proceed with scheduled meetings and conference calls. A few phone interviews went over the one hour time allotted, even though the executive was given an opportunity to stop at the one hour point. The shortest interview lasted 42 minutes and the longest lasted 1 hour and 48 minutes.

### Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns among those categories (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The inductive analysis for this study was an ongoing, cyclical process that involved interim analysis, coding, categorizing, and interpreting data to provide explanations of the phenomenon of interest. Through the process of inductive analysis, categories and patterns emerged from the data. The process of data analysis included data reduction and data display.

To begin the data reduction process, the researcher read each transcript several times to get a sense of the whole phenomenon. Then the researcher reread the transcripts and identified meaning units by coding the transcripts line by line. A table was developed based on the three research questions and included a fourth column to allow for other

information to be noted that was not related to one of the research questions but was germane to the study (See Table 5).

Table 5

*Data Analysis Table for Coding*

Pg# Ln#	RQ 1 (IQs 1, 2-6, 13-14)	Pg# Ln#	RQ 2 (IQs 1, 7-9, 13-14)	Pg# Ln#	RQ 3 (IQs 1, 10-12, 13-14)	Pg# Ln#	MISC (IQs any)
	What are the most common strategies that women leaders report as following to achieve career success?		What obstacles to career success do women leaders report as having overcome and how has this been accomplished (strategies)?		To what extent has pursuit of career success affected life satisfaction?		Applies in general to study
P2 L9	good people skills, hard work, flexibility to change	P9 L4	Being very timid and a low confidence level	P2 L15	I broke into the six-figure income – that was when I knew I had arrived [made it]	P21 L12	There's quite a few women and I mean in really key jobs [industry stats-top levels]
P3 L1	support of the family	P9 L6	husband helped a lot [family support]	P20 L11	Missed spending time with my daughter when she was growing up		
P6 L4	understanding the company objectives [big picture]	P9 L9	Maturity helps a lot.				

The table has a column for each research question (RQ) and shows which interview questions (IQs) may contain answers that inform the research question. However, during coding the interraters were encouraged to put meaning units in any column that they felt

was appropriate, even if the answer did not come from the interview questions noted at the top of the column. This was necessary because most of the interviews did not flow linearly, even though the participants were given the interview questions prior to the interview and an interview protocol was used by the researcher. The interviews were conducted more as conversations. The interview protocol was strictly a guide that could be referred back to when it was time to move on to the next interview question.

The coding table and transcripts were given to the two interraters who each reviewed the data independently and separately coded the transcripts as recommended by Richie and Spencer (2002). The transcripts were de-identified before distribution to protect the confidentiality of the participants. Repetition of similar data found during coding was eliminated, counting only once for each respondent. The codes established separately were mostly in alignment. There were few discrepancies between the coders but when issues were encountered, a discussion was conducted until consensus was achieved. Discussions referred back to the context of the material surrounding the interview excerpt. The 13 hours of interview tape recordings produced 256 pages of transcripts. The researcher and two interraters then produced a total of 234 pages of coded excerpts. From the coded excerpts themes were identified for each research question. A matrix was compiled which showed the number of different participants who mentioned each item. Themes were chosen as significant if more than half of the participants identified them as important. For example, after collapsing the themes for RQ1 regarding success strategies, a total of 18 major themes (mentioned by more than half of the participants) and 10 minor themes remained (those mentioned by less than half the participants but still considered relevant).

#### Data Display

Data display was organized by research question and accomplished by both Pareto charts showing relevant themes and selected transcript excerpts that were most representative of the participants' thoughts. Confidentiality required the use of labels to identify participants. Each participant has been identified by labels corresponding to their interview order: for example, Participant 1 (P1), Participant 2 (P2), and so forth. Themes were grouped as major themes and minor themes for each research question. Major themes were those topics raised by at least half of the participants as being important. Minor themes were selected by less than half of the participants but were still deemed relevant for explication and discussion of the results.

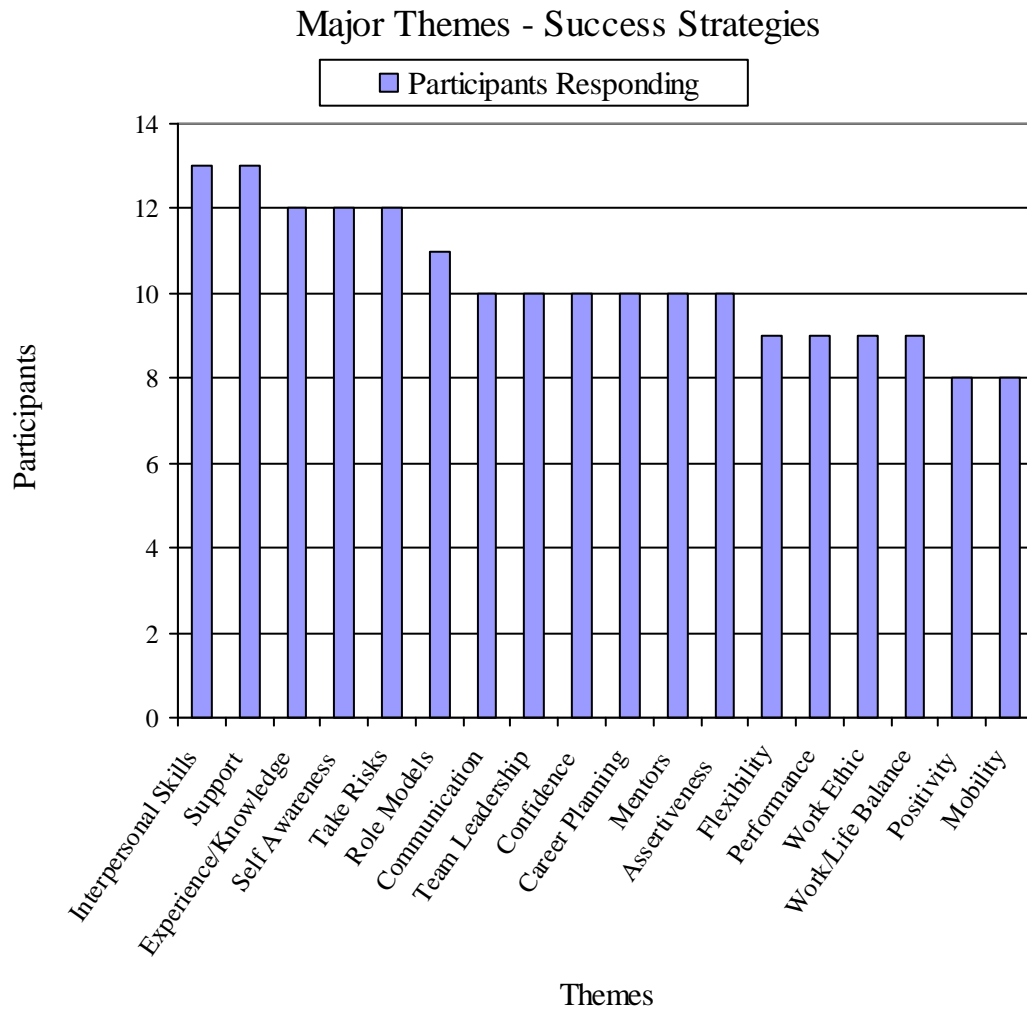
### *Research Question 1*

Research Question 1 asked: What are the most common strategies that women leaders report as following to achieve career success? Figure 2 shows the major themes and frequencies identified by the researcher in answer to Research Question 1. The major themes were selected by at least half of the participants as being an important success strategy. The following excerpts illustrate the major themes.

#### *Interpersonal Skills*

Every participant discussed the importance of having the relational skills embodied in the theme of interpersonal skills, which was also referred to as “people skills” and building relationships. The following quotes provide an understanding of why the participants felt this was so important:

Things that helped me to be a good manager....I manage people so really good people skills. (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)



*Figure 2.* Frequency of response for major themes identified for research question 1.

[The most important factor in my career success has been] understanding what makes people tick. (P6, personal communication, December 13, 2006)

Factors that had a catalyst role in my success were my ability to make people comfortable with me, and that's inside IBM and with customers and business partners. Once I realized that I could establish trust, whether it was from my boss, trusting me to get the job done the way it should be done, or my customer trusting that the recommendations I'm making were best for their business not just for my payroll, or colleagues helping me get the job done, trusting that I would represent their work well, I'd get to meetings on time. I just think making people comfortable with me, making myself understood and listening to others and establishing or negotiating common objectives and goals is my strength. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

You need analytical skills and good people skills, the ability to work with a variety of people. (P9, personal communication, January 16, 2007)

It's about building relationships. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

I think it's really about making sure you invest in a positive relationship with your supervisor. Whatever ice needs to be broken, break it. (P10, personal communication, January 18, 2007)

### *Support*

A second major theme that was mentioned by all participants was having support, whether from family or work colleagues. Following are excerpts to illustrate this theme:

Without my husband, I could never do all of this. Even with all the things you have to take care of. Just think about all these moves. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

[The most supportive of my career success has] definitely been the managers I have worked for, especially at Bank of America. (P11, personal communication, January 31, 2007)

My family, my husband. My husband is so wonderful. He knows what my career goals have been since the onset and has steadily demonstrated belief and faith in my success. He's been supportive of me when I've had to travel, when I've had to miss certain family events. He's been by my side when I needed him to show up to an event that probably was going to bore him to tears, he's there with a positive attitude. I also moved my grandmother here when my first son was born and so she's been my wife. Everybody needs a good wife and my granny has been my wife and she's allowed me to be able to travel. She's there in the evenings so I don't have to feel like I've got to rush home to relieve a nanny, or pick you up from after school daycare at a certain time because granny is right there. Without her support I doubt very seriously I could be as successful as I have been. My bosses too have been extremely supportive. So again if they know what your career goals are they can help and they can support you. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

Absolutely my husband...very early on he agreed I was in a position given what I did and what he did, that I could make a more substantial economic contribution to the family. But in order to do that there would be a certain amount of inflexibility in my life that was going to be the cost of achieving that and a willingness on his part to step up and help the family deal with the consequences of my lack of flexibility. So that's come in every possible way. He talks to me about the work issues that



trouble me, he takes care of the routine things with my children that my schedule does not allow me to permit. Most of all he has not become “well I’m the parent and you’re the worker”, but rather structures things in order to help me be a parent too. He is great. (P3, personal communication, August 24, 2006)

### *Experience/Knowledge*

The next substantial theme arising from the interviews was that of gaining as much experience and knowledge as possible. Twelve of the thirteen participants (92%) discussed how important it was to acquire a breadth of experience and knowledge and to be able to transfer skills to new opportunities. Following are excerpts that illuminate this concept:

If you look at the bio/resume you can see that there haven’t been many jobs that were alike. (P2, personal communication, August 10, 2006)

I had three six month opportunities to learn very different things and move very quickly through that organization and it moved very fast and I learned a lot, where it was a place people stayed away from. I think that it is real important to be able to look at those things, take those kinds of risks, because again there is a very select, small pool that they tend to pull from. (P4, personal communication, September 12, 2006)

If you think you want to run a P&L or have any inkling of having that kind of job, then you should really go for sales. Go early because you can get out. And then you’ll get your other experiences. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

I really, really learned a lot....And what I’ve learned most: in a for-profit environment you tend to measure results in revenue; in a not-for-profit environment, you measure your results by the way you’re impacting society and making the world a better place. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

Start building skills and accentuating your talent and adjusting your attitude and growing in your knowledge so that you establish the style that is your signature. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

### *Self-Awareness*

Self-awareness was a theme reported by 12 participants (92%). The issues raised by participants ranged from knowing their own strengths and weaknesses to understanding their core values and trusting their instincts. Following are excerpts that explain their

advice:

Women should assess their skills and know what they want in their career. Often women look in the mirror and don't see the reality. Know your skill set. (P9, personal communication, January 16, 2007)

I had a personality assessment done and what I am is a strong characteristic in negotiator/moderator/mediator – it's very much a part of who I am. It's a very unique set of skills. Very few people fundamentally in the core of who they are work that space, and that's the space that I work. (P10, personal communication, January 18, 2007)

Choose something you like and deal with the consequences. If you want to be an artist then pursue it, pursue it with vigor, and adjust your expectations on your standard of living until you hit it big. It's much easier to adjust your expectations on your standard of living and go pursue something you love, than it is to pursue something for economic reasons only. That's not really success at the end of the day in my book. (P3, personal communication, August 24, 2006)

What am I lacking or need to know? (P4, personal communication, September 12, 2006)

You've got to know what brings you happiness, know what your situation is, know what your goals are, and then try to operate within that context. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

I think if you have a good value system and you've got a pretty grounded approach to life and feel pretty well balanced and comfortable in your own skin, I think it just makes it easy for you to do the right thing even if it's not the most popular decision at the time you do it. So it just gives you the confidence to think things through and follow your instincts. Use the data obviously, but your instincts as well. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

### *Take Risks*

Taking risks was a major theme that 12 of the 13 participants (92%) felt was important. The participants talked about things such as getting out of their comfort zone, trying new things, and taking calculated risks. More than one described a "dare to be fired" mentality. Here are some excerpts that explain their thinking:

Take a risk and go do something different....Go do something different to develop a new skill, leverage, get out of your comfort zone. I think people that do find how good they really are and what they can contribute. (P6, personal communication,

December 13, 2006)

Yes I was taking a risk but it was calculated that if I fell flat on my face, there would be a spot for me in the organization. Because of those years of proving myself, they would find a spot for me. So yes I took the risk but I also had a safety net, which for me at the time was huge, because I'm not a big risk taker. (P7, personal communication, December 15, 2006)

I have always had a 'dare to be fired' mentality; not in a negative way, but it drove me to saying that I never want to have a job and I never want to be anything where I think I have to act a certain way, or say certain things, or not be able to voice my opinion. (P4, personal communication, September 12, 2006)

Be willing to take some stretch goals and be willing to fail. My second job at [the bank] I almost got fired. I didn't know what I was doing. I made some mistakes along the way too but it was a stretch goal. That was kind of a big leap. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

### *Role Models*

Role models were named by 11 of the 13 participants (85%) as important to their success. Participants shared that they had multiple role models. Most participants named family members as role models, many mentioning their mothers, but some naming their father or uncle as an influence. Also mentioned were people at work and women in business who were mentioned in the media. Excerpts follow:

First of all my parents. My parents were married at a very young age, they were both still in high school but they went on to get graduate degrees. They went on to work full time, to be great parents as far as being engaged in my siblings and my academic success, our extracurricular success, they were always there. They set a great example of what family values should look like, what hard work and what a work ethic should look like. So I would say that's where I got my first introduction to great role models. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

My mother was a role model. If I looked at the things that she taught us it was all about independence, being outspoken, being hard working. I grew up in a family of seven girls. It was like you were always out there doing things that were considered the work men would do. We were raised really as an individual that set out to do things versus as if you're a woman doing this, or a woman doing that. It was like, so you're doing that, you as a person are doing that. I think that was very important because I can remember I did not go through my career thinking "I'm a woman, I'm different." It was that I grew up with no boundaries. And so I went into the

workplace the same way. I'm me, here's what I have to offer and I'm not looking for anything special. I don't think I should be treated differently. I don't feel like people are against me because I'm a woman. I think part of what helped me along was the lack of role models or horrible models. I had I think four bosses that were actually fired. So you learned about "OK, I'm not going to do this, I'm not doing that." I don't want to be that kind of person. You look at so much of the negative, rather than saying I aspire to be that. You decide I am not going to be like that for those reasons. You could take positive things from it, by watching someone and doing the opposite. You learn a lot about how you don't want to be. It helps you know who you are. It was MORE powerful for me. (P4, personal communication, September 12, 2006)

I had a couple of role models. Since I was a little kid my aunt and uncle [were] because my aunt had a career and my uncle supported it and they were very equal in their partnership and their marriage and what they viewed in life and they didn't live in the small town I grew up in. They got to travel to all these exotic places. They were at a higher economic status than my family so they took me on some trips and places and they kind of mentored me along the way. I always knew I wanted to go to college, to get out of Dodge basically, to get out of town, and since I wanted all these things, I needed some money to do this. They were very driven, and my uncle is still a bit of a driving force in my outlook on careers and life. And then my current boss; I've worked for him since 1998, and he's just been someone who is a great role model for me because he's not the status-quo kind of guy. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

I remembered seeing Anne Fudge in the public press and I always said I would love to accomplish what she has accomplished, leading a business. And that was the first time I had the sense of what was truly possible. (P10, personal communication, January 18, 2007)

### *Communication*

Communication was a major theme discussed by 10 of the 13 participants (77%).

Effective communication as described by the participants included managing up by informing their boss of the big picture only (not diving into the details), seeking feedback, giving and receiving constructive criticism, and providing clear direction. Here are examples in their own words:

I think women tend to have a tendency to want to go through the detail with you. That's not what people want. They want the bottom line. They want to agree that we're talking about the same question and they want the bottom line and they want a couple of anecdotal points so they get it. Then they don't want the rest of the

detail. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

It wasn't very long in working with him that I knew he didn't want any detail at all. He only wanted the bullet points because if I did an email that was more than 4 or 5 sentences long, he never finished reading it, he'd call me. (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)

In order to [create a strong track record] you need to have the confidence that what you're putting out is of excellent quality and you need to get feedback on that from your boss and from your peers. Sometimes feedback is taken for granted, meaning that you don't always get it in a direct fashion so some people think they're doing great work but they're not. So sometimes you have to ask the hard questions. And don't be afraid to ask the hard questions. How am I doing? Am I meeting your expectations? What could I do to exceed your expectations? (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

I said, "Can we have a conversation so I understand this feedback?" (P10, personal communication, January 18, 2007)

Find ways to constructively criticize if you need to. (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)

Set the stage for people to feel like you welcome constructive criticism I think is so very important. And if they don't give it to you, ask for it. So what could I do better on a scale from 1 to 10? If you're about to promote somebody and I'm not in the number one slot, what do I need to do to get there? And be quiet and let them talk and tell you because there are some pretty good nuggets you can get. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

I've got to have the people feel that they have a leader that can provide clear direction without being cocky. (P10, personal communication, January 18, 2007)

Be clear with people about how you're defining your role. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

Clarify expectations. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

The power of communication is one of your strongest tools – use it to your advantage. (P6, personal communication, December 13, 2006)

### *Team Leadership*

Team leadership was a major theme raised by 10 of the 13 participants (77%). The women believed strongly that their success was due in part to having successful team

leadership abilities. Following are excerpts to illustrate this point:

Get yourself on teams because business is a team sport. It doesn't have to be a sports team but it can be....It's about getting things done collaboratively. It's not really about individuals. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

I knew a lot about leadership and a lot about building teams in organizations and that's what I've done over the last year. (P6, personal communication, December 13, 2006)

You have to be a team builder; you've got to know how to develop people and develop a team. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

I can go in and drive the best numbers from my team because people feel good about the work they do, they feel good about the company they work for and they feel good that they are respected and treated with dignity every day. I like to speak to that human piece. So that has been my philosophy. It's not about me, it's about my team. (P10, personal communication, January 18, 2007)

My strategy certainly is to assemble the best team, the old Jim Collins' 'get the right people on the bus', Good to Great, and make each and every person on the team feel that they own a piece of the team's success. No one is less important than anyone else; everyone is critical to the team's success. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

### *Confidence*

Confidence was a theme raised by 10 of the 13 participants (77%). While most boldly stated you need confidence to be successful, a few gave the impression you should try to appear confident even if you do not entirely believe it yet. Here are their comments:

Believe you can and you will. I think confidence is half the battle. (P6, personal communication, December 13, 2006)

I had never been an auditor before. It took a certain sense of confidence to know that what you are bringing to the job is leadership capabilities. (P2, personal communication, August 10, 2006)

You need to have the confidence that what you're putting out is of excellent quality. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

It's a level of confidence that you bring and...being confident even when you're sweating on the inside. (P10, personal communication, January 18, 2007)

One of the funniest things from that dinner I was telling you about [with the high achieving women at the White House] where we had those folks trying to talk us into going into politics, they also said, “You know, it’s interesting, whenever we say that to a group of men, or an individual man, you ought to think about going into politics, they ask, ‘How do I get started? Who do I talk to?’ When you say it to a woman their first thing is, ‘Well, I’m not sure I know enough to do the job.’” It’s almost to a tee, a completely different approach in life. And it just rang very true for me. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

Be confident in your space and step out with more confidence because you’ll know more tomorrow than yesterday. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

### *Career Planning*

Career planning was a major theme for 10 of the 13 participants (77%). Advice ranged from analyzing organizations early in one’s career to reevaluating where the woman is on a continuing basis. Many high achieving women suggested others consider organizational values and how they aligned with a woman’s own core values and life goals. One participant shared a cautionary tale to explain the hazards of being too specific when career planning:

Develop a plan. And that means take out a sheet of paper and write down what do you want to do, what are your career goals. So number one you want to go to college, you want to get a degree, you want to have some great internships, you want to have some great mentors, and you want to meet with some people that do things that may interest you....Discover what it is that you like and discover what makes you happy....Seek out people that can help you with your career. Go on lots of informational interviews. So write a plan down, look at it a few times a year, tweak it, talk about your successes with that plan, talk about what you want to do for the next year in that plan. If you do that starting in high school, you’re going to have a pretty successful and powerful life. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

The division I was in was being sold and I didn’t want to end up with some company that I didn’t pick. I reached out to a couple of execs that I had built a relationship with and wanted to think about how I could exercise my own options. (P10, personal communication, January 18, 2007)

[It] made me realize that you can do it if you set a game plan. (P6, personal; communication, December 13, 2006)

You can be great, great, great, but if you're in an area that is shrinking, or if you're in an area that is not strategic to the company, in a big company at least, a Fortune 1000, it's kind of like the analogy that if a tree falls in the woods and nobody is there who cares. No one hears it, right? Partly you have to position yourself in an area that is strategic to the company or that is truly growing. A mentor of mine once told me you can make more mistakes in a business that's growing because who cares....I think smart people do that. People who are smart about their careers do that. I think women tend to be loyal to the end. It's like, nope, you can't be. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

You need to reevaluate what it is that you want, or what do you want to have happen. What is it that you want to do? (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)

Doing what I thought was right in my own value system - it didn't always work. So it depends on if you're in a company that has a shared value system. And if you are it will work, and if you're not, it may not. And I saw that happen. Women [should] know their value system and know that of the company they're with. In my career I would say that is to me the most important thing in choosing. That's exactly how I wound up in this company. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

I had always heard that you need a career plan and you need to have all the steps laid out of how you were going to get there and that you needed to target a certain job. So I did that, I targeted a particular job that I wanted in contracts and pricing. It was a top job in the company and I knew it was a long time away. I knew that I could work at a series of steps towards it, which I did. I received promotions, worked hard and got my certification in contracts and pricing....I did everything I could to excel in that role so that someday I could get that job. Then one day, I woke up and there had been a major reorganization that took place at the company, as there are in all companies. In this case, the job was organized away and didn't even exist. I was devastated by that. I felt like I had invested a lot of time, I felt like I had put all my eggs in one basket. Meanwhile, I was still in my twenties, but at the time it just seem devastating to me. It made me learn something, which was not to be so focused again in the future because that certainly wouldn't be the last reorganization we saw, and that I needed to focus on a broader set of requirements. So that turns out to be what really worked over time, which was instead of describing to myself specific jobs that I wanted to focus on, I instead said things like: I like large scale process improvement, I like enterprise wide type goals, I like dealing with boards, and so on. So instead of describing it in terms of a specific discipline, I described it in those kinds of parameters. That really opened the world to me. (P2, personal communication, August 10, 2006)

### *Mentors*

Having a mentor was cited by 10 of the 13 participants (77%) as very important to



their success. Almost all participants reported having both male and female mentors but most noted having more male than female mentors, especially in the early years of their careers. In addition to positive mentoring relationships, much was learned by the participants from both tough and also from negative mentors. In addition to having mentors, four of the thirteen participants reported mentoring others which they felt had enhanced their life but also given them a different perspective and a valuable network of new talent.

Excerpts follow:

I've had the privilege of actually having several mentors, but there is one that stands out completely. He was the gentleman that ran the facility that I worked in. Also [the CFO] became my mentor....She was a very good mentor as well. [The first gentleman] was the one that lasted my entire career, no matter where he moved or I moved, we still kept in touch. (P2, personal communication, August 10, 2006)

First and foremost I've been fortunate throughout my career to have mentors. Establishing mentorships early on certainly has helped develop me, open up the concept of new possibilities, and give me the confidence that I should go for opportunities. And certainly I've been introduced to others through those relationships. (P6, personal communication, December 13, 2006)

I've had many mentors, mostly male. Some of that has to do with the face of the organization which has changed over the years. When I started 17 years ago, in those positions were mostly men and today there are more women around. Interestingly, in some respects looking back on my career there are people that I would consider mentors and for all the right reasons I decided not to choose what they did. That style I didn't like, it didn't feel comfortable for me so I used them as a mentor almost as a way not to do it than a way to do it....I think it's more because it's not who I am. It worked for them and they did what they needed to do, but it wasn't comfortable for me. (P7, personal communication, December 15, 2006)

The other thing that I think has been key to my career success is that I've had incredible sponsors and mentors. And these are people that I have sought out because I respect their work ethic, their work product, their leaderships skills, and in so many words I've asked them to adopt me. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

I've had a couple. I would say two males and two females, that all have different roles and different approaches. And I think it's always good to triangulate your information. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

Mostly they have been men in senior positions at IBM. Officially, I was not assigned a mentor; in fact I was adopted by my mentor....Being adopted by him as a mentor, really positioned me. Now since him (he retired) I've been assigned another formal mentor. I connected with other leaders in the company who have mentored me for specific and different things and so I continue to thank them. I continue to reach back, reach up, and I have personally benefited from informal and formal mentors. I'll tell you that my informal mentee/mentor relationships have been with people of similar ethnicity...typically a Black man or a Black female ahead of me in their career. The more formal assignees, White males, [have been] very open, very receptive, and very willing to take credit for all of my career success. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

I've also seen a lot of great people that don't get the sponsors and mentors and they're those quiet silent performers that don't really get the recognition they deserve. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

I am mentoring several people now in the organization and I think I see the value added of being a mentor is that you force that person to get the emotion out of it and just to take a step back. The value for the mentor too which is what I missed on my career growth, is I get to see some pretty high potential people in the organization. It's like wow I'm going to keep them in mind if I hear of a job opening versus if I didn't get to meet them I might not throw their name out there. So it just increases the network if you use mentors. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

### *Assertiveness*

Assertiveness was a major theme that was referred to by 10 of the 13 participants (77%). Their descriptions of the phenomenon ranged from being proactive to being assertive and creating your own destiny. Following are excerpts to illustrate:

I learned a lot from her as far as how to be proactive. My management doesn't want me to call them to get the answers. They want me to tell them the answers and then make them work. (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)

Do not accept the rules that other people tell you are the rules. Evaluate every situation for yourself. Do not believe for an instant that something is not obtainable, if it seems to you looking at it, that it ought to be. Everything is more flexible than it appears to be, and it's just incumbent upon people to demand it. (P3, personal communication, August 24, 2006)

I've pretty much always gone after my goals. (P6, personal communication, December 13, 2006)

These are people that I have sought out because I respect their work ethic, their

work product, their leaderships skills, and in so many words I've asked them to adopt me. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

It is important to create your own destiny. (P9, personal communication, January 16, 2007)

Coming back from grad school, I want a core job. I want something that is core to the operations of this business in order to achieve my career interests. (P10, personal communication, January 18, 2007)

So if you keep the same job and you just do what the person before you did, that's not going to add that much value....The real issue is how do I go in and change it and grow it. I also would say assume your role is whatever you want it to be. Then be clear with people about how you're defining your role. And never assume your role is only as big as you think you read it in a job description. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

### *Flexibility*

Flexibility was put forth by 9 out of 13 participants (69%) as instrumental in their success. They described change as constant and the willingness to be flexible within this environment as a key factor in overcoming roadblocks and taking advantage of opportunities. Here are their comments:

Flexibility to change in big companies. A lot of times you're asked to change directions, depending on what your industry might be doing or what the initiatives of the company might be. Every year your top people make certain goals or achievements they want so you have to be able to be flexible to be able to adjust to the direction the company's going. (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)

Change is a constant for me as opposed to a difficult situation. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

I had to approach each new thing and each environment and figure out what was going to work and bring flexibility to it was probably the biggest. (P3, personal communication, August 24, 2006)

Flexibility is really important. (P4, personal communication, September 12, 2006)

Figure out what they are interested in, but realize that it probably will change over time as they develop and mature, and to be flexible with that. But with the flexibility also to achieve success they have to be really diligent and persistent in what they put their minds to. It may not always work out perfectly or meet their

expectations but that is where the flexibility comes in. (P11, personal communication, January 31, 2007)

I was really ready for the change...you get used to constant change so you're not resistant to it. The first thing is just to accept it and then plan. My ability to adapt and to be flexible and to set goals and then reset goals, all comes from that early upbringing...my dad being in the military. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

### *Performance*

Performance was a major theme articulated by 9 of the 13 participants (69%). The women explained that both producing results and the quality of those results were important to their success. Following are excerpts that further illustrate these concepts:

Being successful in whatever job I was doing.... be ready to prove yourself rather than how much time you've spent in a job. That's real important. And you have to be able to look at what you're doing and ask yourself would others below, above me, and my peers, recognize that if I got that, that I'd earned it. (P4, personal communication, September 12, 2006)

First is that I work really hard to produce quality work so I can create a strong track record. I will talk a lot about leadership skills and mentoring and career strategies but it's all got to be under the premise that you produce really good quality work. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

I've always felt that a person who can successfully provide results is what it all boils down to. And it's not just getting the numbers but how you get the numbers, how you lead an organization, that leadership quotient, the ability to take problems on directly. (P10, personal communication, January 18, 2007)

I was very successful, the numbers were incredible. I probably only was there a little over a year. The goal was to have me out there for about two, but in a year's time they asked me to come in and run this branch. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

The worst thing anybody could say about me at my funeral is she was really mediocre. The best thing they could say is that she was effective. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

My main strategy, and this sounds ridiculous but it's true, has just been quality, quality, quality. Just never taking my foot off of the accelerator in terms of making sure that everything I did, regardless of the level of the thing I was asked to do, was of the highest quality. (P3, personal communication, August 24, 2006)

### *Work Ethic*

Work Ethic was a major theme revealed by 9 of the 13 participants (69%). The overwhelming sentiment expressed by the women was that of hard work being essential to success. Here are examples of their comments:

Things that helped me to be a good manager...hard work. (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)

I do believe that work ethic is really important. I look at some of the people coming up now and it's very different, everything has to be perfect, and it has to be these kind of hours, this kind of environment, this kind of deal. I think back when I started in the work force, I was just about whatever you had you worked hard at it, you did a really good job at it, and stuck with it. (P4, personal communication, September 12, 2006)

[The most important factor in your career success?] Obviously hard working. (P7, personal communication, December 15, 2006)

First is that I work really hard. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

It took a lot of hard work. (P9, personal communication, January 16, 2007)

Rewarding my hard work by the promotions I have received throughout the years. (P11, personal communication, January 31, 2007)

Not having the dependency of my ex-husband's income made me work harder. So I had more fuel, more ambition, and maybe some revenge, something to prove, prove that I could do it. Career wise it was actually my savior. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

### *Work/Life Balance*

Work/life balance was a major theme detailed by 9 of the 13 participants (69%). Their strategies included setting limits at the office, pacing their career to allow for more time at home when needed, and including activities in their life that help them relax and grow. Here are some excerpts to illustrate these points:

And balance also between work and family, which you really have to do. I love my job but I also love my family and being able to do both has made me balanced and

makes me more productive here, perhaps in fewer hours, because I do have to get home to go to my kid's performance or soccer game, or whatever has to be done. I also would say I paid my dues earlier knowing that when I have kids I may need to rebalance. I've already had those points in the system. Especially today with telecommuting, as a sales person, I have my Blackberry, I have my cell phone - I can do it from anywhere. But there's also a certain amount of face time that's needed. But because I already have the reputation of being a hard worker, I don't feel that the face time is as important now as it was earlier in my career when I had the time and the ability to do that. (P7, personal communication, December 15, 2006)

I adjust my schedule, try to leave work at five, so they're home, do homework, eat, and then work. Make a conscious effort to get out and say that time, I'm there, I'm available, you know put them first kind of thing. (P4, personal communication, September 12, 2006)

Now you have to determine how much stress you want to take in different parts of your life....I passed up a couple of opportunities because I knew that would blow up my household. You just have to make choices along the way. Pacing the career. You choose the pace. When you're in your 20s you don't think about pacing anything - you don't have to because you don't have to sleep. But when you get in your 30s and certainly now with a family, [or] it could be aging parents, or it could be a health issue, there are a lot of things hitting you when you get older. You have to make some choices around that pacing and I think those are some difficult things. Now I did make a choice, and this was a work/life balance choice. I was consulting and traveling five days a week, and I was in my 20s. I was miserable, I had no social life. I didn't have work/life balance, so I took a pay cut and it was soon out of business school. People were like what are you doing? I took a huge pay cut to come out of consulting and into financial services....It was the right thing to do....You have to trust your gut. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

When I worked at [Company A], it was just a very cutthroat company where you had to really be on top of everything and you were never given a lot of time to accomplish a particular goal and you had to do it very, very quickly and in order to do that, everybody worked overtime....So part of it was changing companies - moving....moving to another company with a little bit of a different culture. This [current] company is a really family-oriented culture and they really encourage people to spend time with their families and just encourage the whole family environment and not spending all your time at work. (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)

I wanted to work hard first and then have kids and a husband. (P9, personal communication, January 16, 2007)

I don't work weekends. I don't come into the office every weekend. With the

digital age shame on you if you can't get some way to show your organization that you expect them to balance. When the boss shows up for work on the weekends it sends a signal that I expect everyone else to be here on the weekends....So I don't come in unless it's something urgent. (P10, personal communication, January 18, 2007)

I think I used to work a lot more hours and I do think that was probably problematic in the development of my relationship with my husband. I fly every week. So, I do a lot of travel. I live in two places, that's another thing that's comfortable for me. My home is in Colorado. My office is in Washington D.C. So I have a home in both places. To me, it's actually easier. For me that works. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

I used to do everything myself because I felt nobody could do it as well as I could do and I didn't delegate as much as I should....It was nothing for me to work 70 hours a week or 80. I was putting in horrible, horrible hours and weekends. And that just recently, like I said, I let go of that and trusted my managers. [My husband] would always tell me to delegate....Partly it was because my blood pressure went way up...and the doctor saying, "You need to put it in perspective a little bit better." (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)

Rewarding myself with a spa visit at least once a month for the rest of my life was a smart thing to do. When I can't do my spa visit, I feel I missed out. If I'm too busy, and it is getting challenging..., then I do feel that I have missed out. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

Along the way there are a lot of little choices, but I have not had to make one big choice where I was trying to fight for work/life balance. It's more little things. One came up yesterday. We had a regional staff meeting. A national manager was there visiting and afterwards my manager said "We are all going out to dinner. Would you like to join us?" I had a class that night at the church which was very important. So I said "No I have a class at church that I am committed to so I can't join you guys." I would not have changed that decision because even though I am allowed a certain amount of absences in the class, I would not have changed that decision, even though everyone else was going. The class was important to me. That helps maintain balance in my life as well. I was not given grief over it. You have to sacrifice something to be successful in your career but if it throws your life out of balance because you are saying yes too much it is really not worth it in the end. There is no peace of mind. It does not prolong your happiness or your quality of life. (P11, personal communication, January 31, 2007)

### *Positivity*

Positivity was a major theme touched on by 8 of the 13 participants (62%). Their comments ranged from expressions of believing anything is possible to the power of a

positive attitude. Following are excerpts:

I think what I would say immediately is to not assume that there are any barriers to anything. Don't put limits on your planning because they really can do anything....Don't put any kind of barriers in place. (P2, personal communication, August 10, 2006)

Also bringing enthusiasm and good nature to the doing of it. (P3, personal communication, August 24, 2006)

I grew up with no boundaries. And so I went into the workplace the same way. (P4, personal communication, September 12, 2006)

I think it's because I grew up encouraged to determine my own destiny....Fact of the matter is that when you grow up kind of taught that way, there is nothing that you can't do. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

Strategies that I have used: I try to stay extremely positive....I think your positive attitude becomes contagious. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

I think that when you treat others well throughout your career and you maintain a positive attitude even in the face of adversity other people will respond positively to that. If they are in that position they will reward that. It starts with a positive thought life. (P11, personal communication, January 31, 2007)

### *Mobility*

The last major theme (one discussed by more than half of the participants) for Research Question 1 was mobility which was brought up by 8 of the 13 participants (62%). The overwhelming consensus in this discussion was that the willingness to move to a new location or department or organization was pivotal to achieving success, and to achieving it faster than staying in one organizational location. Following are excerpts to explain:

Sometimes it's not a good fit for them. They have a different personality, they're in the wrong place and maybe if they were in a different division, a different group or maybe even a different company it might be a better place for them and they might have more success in moving up. (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)

It just kills me to see when people turn down an opportunity because they would rather stay in place and wait for a so called promotion, where they would get a 5 or 10 percent raise. They would say to me why I should move half way across the country for a lateral job. I would think, I don't know but I think I have done it four



times, it has always paid off. (P2, personal communication, August 10, 2006)

I think that you have to be willing to go anywhere and do anything. I think that you limit yourself. I see a lot of people that try to do it all in one place in this industry. I think you don't. Number one, you can't move as fast staying in one place. And you don't learn as much because you're learning everything about one place. (P4, personal communication, September 12, 2006)

I think the world has changed. I think people are very accepting of [diversity] and if you're in a company that's not, get out. There's plenty of other great companies that have gotten it. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

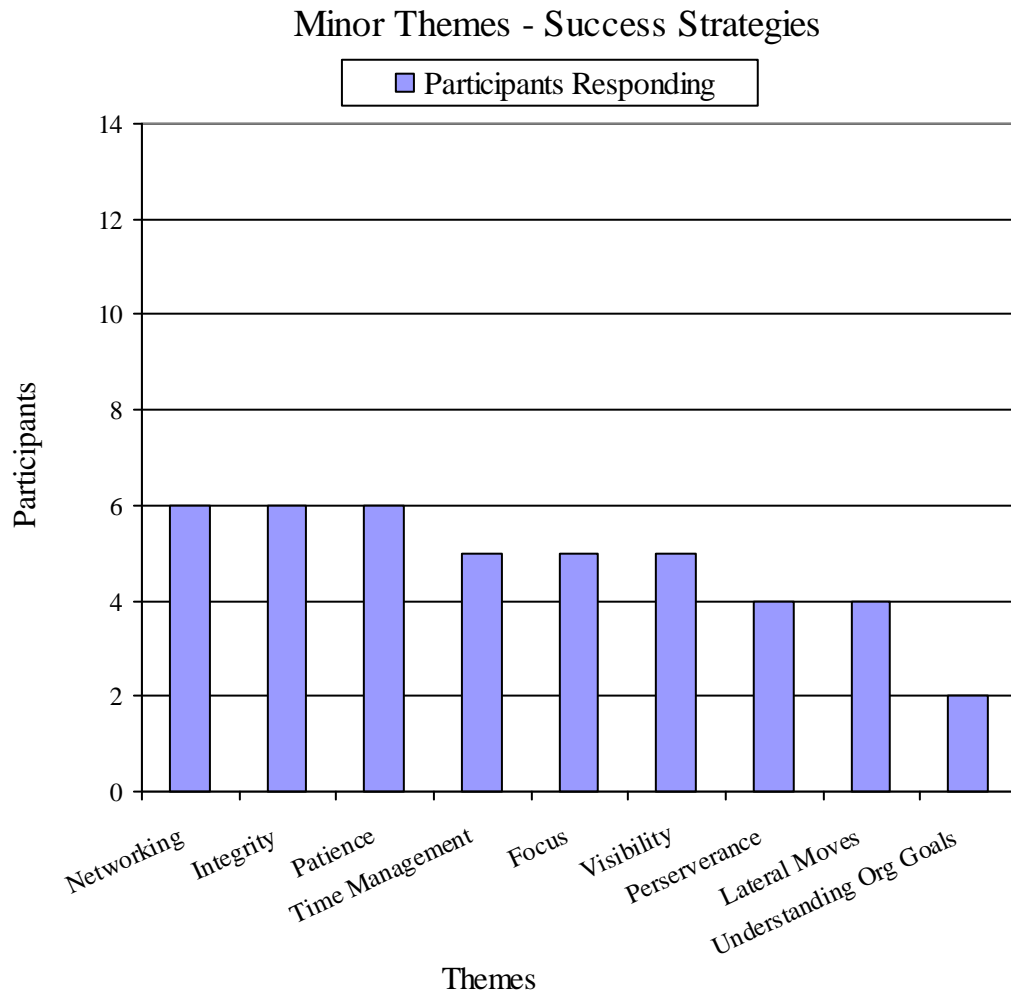
Probably if I think about it, it's that I've moved through my career through many different organizations and positions....If I think through my career I've been very fortunate in that I have moved a lot. I've also been very mobile also, so I've moved many times in my career....[I've] moved four times over the last ten or so years. (P6, personal communication, December 13, 2006)

I have moved, physically moved, 5 times in the last 17 years. I'm 52 years old. So change is a constant for me as opposed to a difficult situation. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

Career wise [my divorce] was actually my savior because I wouldn't have been as mobile. I've lived in five states. I've moved eight times in eleven years....Once I raised my hand and said to IBM I will leave southern California, I have to, to get a better job, my career took off. It just did - like a rocket. I had planned to go to headquarters, do a couple of years, get the divorce, come back to California, be in second line management, then go back to headquarters, do a couple of staff jobs, and then make exec. All of that, which should have taken six years, took three. And at the same time, the kids are getting ready to go to college and now I'm globally mobile. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

### *Networking*

Networking was the first minor theme and was pointed out by 6 of the 13 participants (46%) as important in their career success. Figure 3 shows the minor themes and frequencies identified by the researcher in answer to Research Question 1. The minor themes were selected by less than half of the participants as being an important success strategy, yet they still have merit in understanding how high achieving women succeeded in their careers.



*Figure 3.* Frequency of response for minor themes identified for research question 1.

Following are excerpts which illustrate the participants' views on the theme of networking:

Make sure you're out networking and talking to people who understand what's going on in the broader spectrum. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

You need to network outside the company as well as inside the company. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

I do a lot of networking through community organizations. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

I used to go for about 10 years. I went to escrow association meetings and title

association meetings. It does help a lot. Now I have some of my staff going to those meetings. (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)

### *Integrity*

Integrity was the second minor theme and was acknowledged by 6 of the 13 participants (46%) as important in their career success. The participants defined integrity as being honest, being true to themselves, and doing the right thing. The following excerpts illustrate this theme:

You really have to set that example. Integrity along the way to yourself and in people you work with is very important. (P4, personal communication, September 12, 2006)

Regardless of how high you go or you want to go in an organization, never loose your values that should be important, in terms of treating others with respect, acting with integrity, being honest. (P11, personal communication, January 31, 2007)

That's what I think helped IBM identify me as a potential leader one day. People liked the experience of working with me or they thought I was smart enough to hang out with them, or at least honest enough to always tell the truth and never misrepresent. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

I've done very well but I've also figured out a way once again to be true to myself. If I go out and I'm talking to somebody and they really don't need my products or services, I'll be the first one to tell them. (P7, personal communication, December 15, 2006)

### *Patience*

Patience was the next minor theme and was cited by 6 of the 13 participants (46%) as important in their career success. The main concern of the participants was that women understand it takes time to make it to the ranks of higher positions. The participants felt that many women expect success to happen very quickly which is not often the case. Here is what they advised:

Don't get too restless....It depends on the company. Some companies it takes a long time to move up. I think you've got to prove what new value you've added, not just did you do a good job at what you were doing, but what new value did you add

that wasn't there before. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

I would have to say they need to be patient. It takes more than five years to get to know the business. The problem with young people today is that they want success now. They aren't willing to work hard and wait for the opportunities to come. It takes a lot of hard work. (P9, personal communication, January 16, 2007)

Patience...I actually interview college kids for our management associate program. What I see is they want to attain the success tomorrow. They don't want it to be a year down the road. (P7, personal communication, December 15, 2006)

### *Time Management*

Time management was the next minor theme and was denoted by 5 of the 13 participants (38%). The women felt time management was essential to their ability to succeed in the highest levels of management. Following are excerpts that explain:

I spend a lot of time on my calendar. It is not unusual for me several times a week to go through my calendar for six months out, to make sure I understand what's on there, and that I have allowed time for the commitments that I have. I find that if you schedule these things in early enough, you just make sure you work around them. They happen in your schedule just like anything else in your life. Calendar Management! (P2, personal communication, August 10, 2006)

We have a calendar and we adhere to it. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

I think time management is so key for working professionals. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

Manage your own time. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

### *Focus*

Focus was another minor theme imparted by 5 of the 13 participants (38%). The women's thoughts on this dimension ranged from focusing on the big picture not the details to focusing on what they were doing at that moment. Following are excerpts that illuminate their thoughts:

The ability to see the big picture, the ability to put improvements in place, and not that you need to know all the technical details of the particular discipline. We have

experts in that area. (P2, personal communication, August 10, 2006)

See the big picture. I think that is so important. You've got to see the big picture because if you don't sometimes you find yourself reacting too quickly and not appropriately. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

Whatever job you're in, live in the moment. Do a good job in that job and don't worry too much about where it's going to lead. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

What matters is what I'm doing now. And I try to apply that to every job, every relationship. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

### *Visibility*

Visibility was another minor theme broached by 5 of the 13 participants (38%). The women's advice on this topic centered on gaining exposure in their organizations for the purpose of branding themselves. Excerpts follow:

I'm not saying go out and beat your chest too loudly but you do, to a certain degree, have to take responsibility for getting that exposure and that visibility. I would say some people employ the strategy of saying oh I do great work, I'll get recognized. That's not always true, we have to sometimes stand up and be counted. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

That taught me a lot about creating your path in the organization and what you want to do and kind of what you want to brand yourself to be in the organization. When you meet with somebody you're branding yourself. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

Establish the style that is your signature. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

### *Perseverance*

Perseverance was another theme offered by 4 of the 13 participants (31%). The participants explained that it took a lot of hard work and even set backs to get where they are today and that women must stick with it to prevail. Excerpts explain:

It really is a journey and you have to be committed to that journey, not just to that title or to that position. I see a lot of people fail because they want to fast forward without wanting to do a lot of the hard work in between. (P8, personal

communication, January 4, 2007)

They have to be really diligent and persistent in what they put their minds to. (P11, personal communication, January 31, 2007)

Stick with it. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

### *Lateral Moves*

Lateral moves was another minor theme asserted by 4 of the 13 participants (31%). While this minor theme seems to be a subset of career planning, the participants were very clear that this particular strategy is one that women do not usually think of or allow themselves to do. The participants stressed what a positive difference this strategy had made in their career success. Excerpts follow:

As I look back there is no doubt in my mind that the most important job changes that I took were the ones that were lateral. They were not a promotion and not a raise, but they were pivotal and that was what put me in a position for something really good next. (P2, personal communication, August 10, 2006)

I think that you have to be willing to go anywhere and do anything. And sometimes that might also require that you take something that doesn't necessarily pay you more. (P4, personal communication, September 12, 2006)

During my career I've done a lot of lateral moves. (P6, personal communication, December 13, 2006)

I started out running marketing for all of our branches worldwide....Then I decided after spending about a year and a half doing that... I really wanted to get back into having P&L responsibility....I met with a man who is president of the North American division...and he said, well, the only way I could do that for you is to put you in a training program, put you in a role, actually into a job. It would be more training....The goal was to have me out there for about two, but in a year's time they asked me to come in and run this branch. So, while the title may be the same, the responsibility and compensation programs are higher. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

### *Understanding Organizational Goals*

Understanding organizational goals was the last minor theme and was touched on by 2 of the 13 participants (15%). Their comments advised taking the time initially to

understand what the company goals were so they could address them in their plans:

Understanding the objectives of the company and my managers, the top people in the company, and helping them to achieve the goals, not being an obstacle in their way, not challenging what they were but going along with them. (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)

When I first take on a job I try to understand what are the goals and objectives and I put together my plan. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

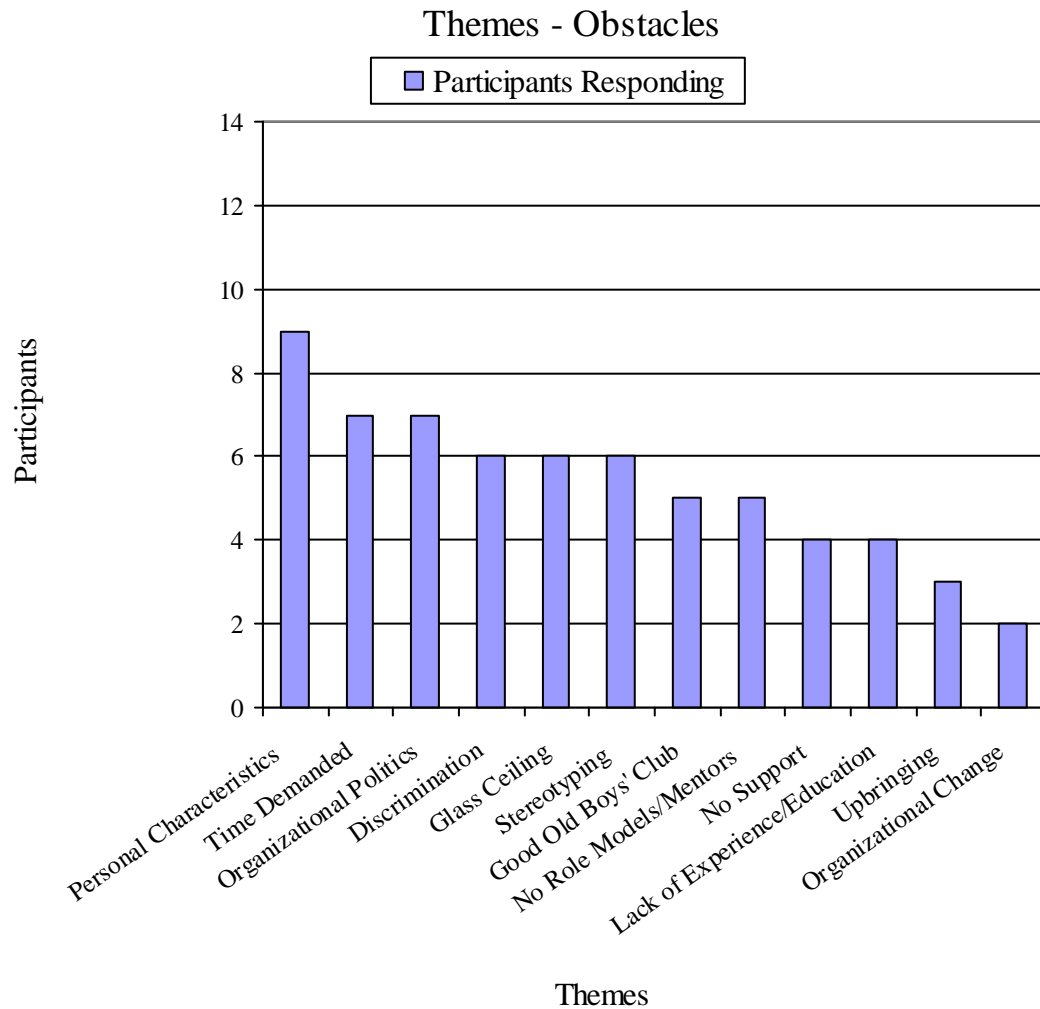
### *Research Question 2*

Research Question 2 asked: What obstacles to career success do women leaders report as having overcome and how has this been accomplished? Figure 4 shows the themes and frequencies identified by the researcher in answer to Research Question 2. All themes discussed by participants as being obstacles they overcame are shown. Some participants gave strategies to explain how they overcame the obstacles and some did not have an answer. Since some strategies mentioned in response to obstacles mirror strategies given in response to Research Question 1, duplication will be avoided. However; when additional strategies and/or strategies specific to the obstacle are mentioned, the strategy revealed by the participants will be included in the excerpt.

### *Personal Characteristics*

Personal characteristics was the theme most reported as an obstacle by participants. This theme was discussed by 9 of the 13 participants (69%). The issues raised by participants ranged from traits they felt were holding them back such as a lack of self-confidence or being risk averse to worrying about pleasing people or comparing their career success to that of others. Following are some excerpts to explain:

Being very timid and having a low confidence level. I've always had a low confidence level, which [my husband] helped a lot. And the thing that helped overcome them was that I've been working 40 years....Maturity helps a lot. (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)



*Figure 4.* Frequency of response for themes identified for research question 2.

Connections with the people that you know in the industry and the people that you get to know also helped to overcome what I think can be obstacles in career goals. Because I am quiet, and I don't want to really get noticed all the time...that doesn't necessarily work to your advantage in the business field. You need to be noticed and you need to be outspoken because that's how people notice you. And if you don't do that, for me connections have been the best. (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)

Early on it was self-confidence and aggressiveness to go for that big stretch goal so I did incremental stretch goals. And I think I missed out on it. I got clued in because, this is probably where a mentor would have helped me early on, rather than try to figure it out myself....I was too risk averse. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)



If you're worrying about whom you're going to please, how you're going to look to people and how things are going to be interpreted too much, then it just holds you back. Be comfortable in your own skin. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

I've had some disappointments, comparing my career advancement to others that I thought weren't ready or as ready, weren't deserving, and I just had to stop that. I just had to say, we're playing golf and it's the course and I need to stay focused on the fairway, the green, my equipment, my score and at the end of the day, when tomorrow comes, the whole party starts over. So it's just a course that I'm playing. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

The next level would be so far up there that for me to consider the next, it's my own mind. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

I really don't believe I've ever experienced any obstacles that I haven't been able to overcome, other than sometimes just my own impatience. Sometimes I've had to wait for the right opportunity....Early on in my career when I'd see my peers getting promoted before me it used to drive me crazy. I think sometimes it's the right place, the right time, the right job, and that's typically what I waited for. (P6, personal communication, December 13, 2006)

### *Time Demanded*

Time demanded was a theme touched on by 7 of the 13 participants (54%). Their comments reveal how difficult it is to work the number of hours their positions demand or they demand of themselves, and still find time for their families and their personal needs.

Following are excerpts that explain:

The largest obstacle is the time demanded, without a doubt. I can't say I have overcome it entirely, because I do not think it's something you can ever overcome. But I managed it, and I managed it by not accepting as real, guidelines and modes of thinking about careers that were being presented. Frequently in law firms, you're either on a partner track or not on a partner track. You're either serious, or you are part-time. I never went part-time but I rejected the idea. I always said look I might not work as many hours as somebody sitting next to me, but if the quality of my work is good, if I can tell the difference between when I need to stay, and when I can go, the fact that I don't stay all the time shouldn't be held against me. If it takes me longer to advance, that's okay....I think by rejecting paradigms, and making it up for yourself and being honest and forthright about it, there is a tremendous amount of flexibility and opportunity than most people recognize. But people are intimidated by existing paradigms and think the choices presented to them are the choices, when in fact, almost everything is a negotiation. (P3, personal

communication, August 24, 2006)

Working 80 hours continuously because I think I was working harder than I really needed to. But you live and you learn....I think that was just part of my DNA makeup. I never felt like if I didn't work that long that I wouldn't get ahead but I think I just literally was the overachiever. At some point you just finally figure out, why am I doing this? I said something is not right with this picture when I'm the first person to work and the last person to leave. But everybody else seems to be doing just fine, what is wrong with me. Actually I think it was just literally saying I'm going to have some things that are important for me to do and to make time for those things. And just saying you're going to do it is half of it. Realizing also that you've got great people around you, let them be great. You don't have to do everything and be in the middle of everything. Realizing that there is a reason why it's a 40 hour week. (P6, personal communication, December 13, 2006)

After that first year and the challenges, I said you know what, I'm not exercising enough and I've got to find a way to put some exercise into my life. I have people that I talk to around the world and that doesn't really work in my traditional sense of the work day (8 to 5). We have early mornings here in Los Angeles because we are a global organization. We start many days at 7:00am with teleconferences. So I thought when I'm talking to my mentees if I were to be up at 5:00am, take the call at home from 5:30-6:30, I'll be dressed to work out. The sun is now out so I feel more comfortable going out on my power walk. Walk from 6:30-7:15, and then I've got from 7:15 to 8:15 to get ready for work. And guess what, now my kid gets to see me more than at the end of the day when I'm tucking her into bed....We get ready for work and school together. I take her to school and then I drive into work and I don't get into work until 9:00am. But I've already done my email; I've already done my one hour teleconference. I dropped the guilt a long time ago because when you're working those kinds of hours and you're getting things done - who cares? I'm not trying to prove to anybody my work ethic. My work ethic is well respected by my organization. (P10, personal communication, January 18, 2007)

### *Organizational Politics*

Organizational politics was a theme disclosed by 7 of the 13 participants (54%).

Their insights indicated the difficulty of trying to navigate the political intricacies surrounding their career journeys. Excerpts follow:

I had already achieved a certain level in the management ranks but it was a really tough company. It was a really hard company to survive with a lot of politics....And the women that are there are really tough women. You have to be. (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)

I put it down as ‘not being political.’ That I can be more political and that doesn’t necessarily mean it’s a bad thing. I mean, I think I probably look at that as being good at managing up. (P4, personal communication, September 12, 2006)

I think because I have such a strong personality, I am not willing to play political games. I feel that other people have prejudged me or unfairly judged me. And just by thinking she would not be interested in taking on this task or responsibility or she wouldn’t like this or she would like that. Over time I just continue to mature and my personality has softened somewhat over time. I have become more patient and understanding with people that I work with. I think they have responded to me positively to the changes in me. I still have a strong personality and am still not willing to play political games, but they appreciate me a lot more than they did in the early days. (P11, personal communication, January 31, 2007)

I could have set up some real political enemies, especially when that guy took my work, but I learned from it. I went up to the gentlemen that actually presented my work and said in front of his colleagues ‘how did you get my charts?’ I knew what had happened....He just turned beet red and started laughing and he didn’t have an answer because he knew. But the gentlemen that did it, I never confronted him. Those little things you just live and learn. You know you don’t want to treat anyone that way, so you become a little bit more guarded. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

### *Discrimination*

Discrimination was a theme acknowledged by 6 of the 13 participants (46%) as an obstacle to career success. The participants described discrimination based on gender, race, and age. They acknowledged that discrimination has been perpetrated by both men and women. The following excerpts illustrate this theme:

I have felt some discrimination during one of the interviews I did. After college I was interviewing for a smaller CPA firm, [which] was owned by a woman. (P11, personal communication, January 31, 2007)

You get comments from time to time that I would consider inappropriate about a quota regarding a minority or a female. I feel like I can go toe to toe with anybody and clearly I don’t think anyone could honestly say that I wasn’t qualified to be there. So if someone says oh we had to meet a quota, I would say seriously and sincerely at the same time, is there a question of my qualifications. You know, you put it right in their face – and then it’s oh no you misunderstood me; I didn’t mean that, or whatever. I also get a lot of women through the mentor circles that get discrimination, and I think sometimes there is still a lot of racism in our world. But it’s not always the core or the root problem and so I think we have to be very careful

when we blame discrimination based on gender or discrimination based on race. So number one I don't want to discount that it is out there, but a lot of times I still think with great performance and a support structure that the opportunities are there. You've got to work hard and surround yourself. And if you think you're in an environment that's discriminatory – get out of there. Go join a company that you think celebrates diversity and welcomes it. I wouldn't tolerate a boss that was making discriminatory comments towards me based upon my gender or my race. If that exists, I would say to women, get out of those situations because a lot of times if you're in an environment like that, it's part of the culture and it's difficult to change the culture. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

I have experienced in many different settings, the sense of people not taking me seriously, which I always experienced as a combination of both being a female and being relatively young. My strategy largely has been one of perseverance. I just work twice as hard, to demonstrate as quickly as I could to that individual what my strengths were. Most of the time I was able to turn the people around and when I wasn't I would talk to mentors or people I trusted in the organization and say what I thought it was. I think naming it when you run into the problem and being effective requires recognizing when you are not going to fix something. I have run into important people who were key to making decisions who simply were not going to get comfortable with me – either because of my age or because I was a woman. I think part of my effectiveness was being able to identify that early on, go to my superiors and say, this isn't going to work and therefore, you need to do something different because the result matters more than my personal stake in fighting this battle. I think in that way, while you might lose the battle with that individual, you do more to win the war because you show everybody else around you that you can be more mature about the situation. Then the situation presents in that you have your priorities right which is making the outcome. What good is it for me to fight somebody who's always going to have a bias against me if it's going to have a negative impact on the outcome? I prefer to name it, call it what it is, say I don't appreciate it but then also recommend a solution that could get us to the necessary outcome, and deal with whatever collateral there is to that problem in a different setting that didn't imperil the necessary outcomes. I found that helped me gain credibility with everyone else in the situation, which made the issue less important. (P3, personal communication, August 24, 2006)

Now I have seen the mommy thing, the mommy track. I have not experienced it and I've done a couple of things here that I may have over compensated. I've been very careful. I have seen, it's interesting, it's women that actually almost half the time have done the mommy track to some other woman. It's very interesting, the things I've seen, it's been like wow you're making an assumption about....And some of my colleagues have confidentially heard of things and told me of things and half the time it has been another woman that has done that to them. There are certainly instances of men doing it, but at least half of them are women....I have a couple of friends in other industries, from business school, and they have absolutely experienced this....But I have seen at [the bank] a couple of assumptions about

mommy track so I've been careful....But I have probably been overly cautious about it. Just because I don't want other women to make this assumption that she can't travel or she can't do that, she can't take that customer call because... I can't give her that job because of that. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

### *Glass Ceiling*

The glass ceiling was a theme depicted by 6 of the 13 participants (46%) as an obstacle to career success. The participants alluded to the fact that men were willing to allow them entrée into certain domains of business but described encountering some difficulty moving into the top echelons. The participants noted their industries and organizations were starting to embrace change, even if at the rate of one retirement at a time. Excerpts follow:

Yes [I've experienced the glass ceiling]. I think men are all fine letting women get to a certain level but after that they are resistant. I do think things are very different for men and women. Our company has about 40,000 employees and maybe 10% have a title. Actually there are virtually no women, no blacks, and no ethnicities in the upper levels. The statistics have been improving though over the last two years. (P9, personal communication, January 16, 2007)

I managed two groups for six months before this position where the departments were largely managed by men, and I was replaced by a man even though I had been doing it....I think that was probably a glass ceiling because that company was very dominated by men. (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)

I had an instructor tell me, 'You know I've never had a woman pass my class and the day I do I'm going to retire.' That was really indicative of a mental attitude about women in that particular industry and I would say throughout my career in aviation, although I never really let it get in my way. I just became a little more cognizant of it over time. I was the first woman airline president of a jet airline in the world and the first woman CEO and I didn't know that either until it happened. So, it's a bit odd that it wasn't that long ago. It was kind of interesting that way. And I saw much of that. They were content to have you be in marketing, content to have you be in public relations, but when it really got into the economics side, when it got into the planning side, which in that business really talked about where should you fly, what kind of airplane should you buy, how much should you charge, so on and so forth, what systems that you could use, and all of that. That really was highly unusual to have a woman running that. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

Lou Gerstner [CEO] came to IBM and changed all those perceptions....He asked all the right questions. Why does everybody in this room look like me—White male between 40 and 55? Where is the diversity here? If it held me back it's the same way that I told my mentor, I wasn't given the opportunity. I can't say that once I got the opportunity that anybody said well we're not going to let her go any further because she's from West Virginia and she's black. It wasn't that per se. But I do think that there is a silicone ceiling. Glass is pretty impenetrable. A silicone ceiling is a dense layer of men who feel that that's right, that of course they should be in those leadership jobs. A few of them, my mentor especially, realized the world is changing. Our chairman realizes the world is flat. We're going to be a global company. We need to understand diversity right here at home in our headquarters location and the best way to do that is to get to know the people who don't look like me, whether they are old or young, male or female, gay or straight, Black or White, Asian, or Native American. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

I say that the IT industry gets better one retirement at a time. That's about the only way you're going to see change. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

### *Stereotyping*

Stereotyping was a theme put forth by 6 of the 13 participants (46%). Their comments reveal that many men still judge women by outdated standards that do not have relevance in today's workplace. Excerpts illustrate this obstacle:

I'd heard and the HR manager told me right off, she said, well if it had been up to him you never would have gotten this job. The guy was nice and he treated women like sisters, mothers, like women, but he would never - it was almost like he was comfortable with women in HR and sales roles and maybe to a certain level in manufacturing roles but when it came to VP it was like way too high up for his comfort level. Even though we're under new management now and we do a lot more diversity talk but I think that they are still only comfortable with women in what I would consider traditional roles: sales, HR, communication, those type things - but running a business, manufacturing, not so much. (P4, personal communication, September 12, 2006)

I started here when I was 22 and the senior manager at the time basically saw me as more of a daughter role, especially because CIT paid my tuition. I was taking my tuition reimbursement to him; it was like daddy can you write me a check. As I progressed through the organization in some respect I always felt like I wouldn't achieve what I needed to with him in that role. I certainly don't fault him for that but he knew me when I was 22 and when I was 28 with 6 more years of experience I was still in his eyes 22. It's like with a parent, you're always a kid. From my perspective, it worked out well that he was old enough to be close enough to

retirement. He retired and then the person that took over for him didn't know me when I was 22. (P7, personal communication, December 15, 2006)

I have had a boss who promoted me and gave me a chance. He gave me lots of opportunities but people thought I was his pet or that I was sleeping with him. I have a woman mentor now. (P9, personal communication, January 16, 2007)

I think there were jobs along the way, and I've said this at my company, that are considered 'girl jobs.' A woman had it before so it's not that unusual, maybe a Black person had that job before so it's not going to be too shocking. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

The older men who rode up the elevator made a silly comment like 'are you the entertainment?' We just looked at each other and laughed it off. It certainly didn't affect me here because it was a networking event. (P7, personal communication, December 15, 2006)

### *Good Old Boys' Club*

Good old boys' club was a theme reported by 5 of the 13 participants (38%). The participants told of their experiences of being excluded by the group of older White men who made up the ruling party at their various organizations. Excerpts reveal this phenomenon:

I think it is limiting and part of it is because I wasn't willing to be a part of the good old boy network. It's there. It's definitely alive and well in forest products....It seems like it didn't really hit until I got into an upper level job and was in the corporate office. I would say from a location perspective I never felt like that was an issue. But once I hit corporate I could see more of it. A good example of that was I told you the one senior VP, the person that said hey I'd like you to take a look at this job and the white paper VP that worked for him was definitely a good old boy. (P4, personal communication, September 12, 2006)

When I was in sales, the fact that I was a female and not a male and not part of the good old boys' club and because of my stature maybe – I'm a relatively petite person. I think I've experienced discrimination but it was so many years ago. I felt like not that I never got anything but more that I was excluded from certain things. (P6, personal communication, December 13, 2006)

At the top I think you still see older White men. (P7, personal communication, December 15, 2006)

I realized there was this inner circle. I needed the inner circles' support to get the

VP/GM on board. I was worried that the inner circle would kill my ideas, so I was trying to make them part of the proposals. (P10, personal communication, January 18, 2007)

Definitely the good old boys' club. In the airline business, there is no question about it and I was with many different airlines and I would say yes to a large degree. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

### *No Role Models/Mentors*

The lack of role models or mentors was a theme voiced by 5 of the 13 participants (38%). The participants spoke of the lack of successful women or men in business and in specific fields that were accessible to them to serve as mentors or role models. The following excerpts document their statements:

I really didn't have a mentor. I didn't have one person that was looking out for me, that checked in with me, that I had regular conversations with. I would say there were probably a couple of people in the upper level that tracked my progress. (P4, personal communication, September 12, 2006)

I haven't really had any role models. (P9, personal communication, January 16, 2007)

My family did not interact with or have a lot of friends that were successful in management or business owners so I did not have a lot of interaction with people in the business world. It was difficult to understand the mindset and maybe that was why I struggled with the conflicts more so in the earlier years. It's a lack of exposure. (P11, personal communication, January 31, 2007)

I told my mom I was the only woman in my statics and dynamics class; there were three women in my calculus class. She said so, you can do this. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

I didn't know at the time that there were no women commercial pilots. There were no women airline pilots. I didn't know that. So, when I got there, there were no women in my class. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

### *No Support*

No support was a theme acknowledged by 4 of the 13 participants (31%) as an obstacle to career success. The participants described a lack of support, mostly from family,



but also from professors. Yet the women persevered and through drive and determination found new sources of support. Excerpts follow:

My first husband was a different kind of a person and he didn't [support me]. It was to the point where when I got raises I didn't tell him. He didn't think it was anything special. He liked the money, but he never encouraged me. I had overtime and brought work home which I used to do when [my daughter] was little and he would have to be sleeping before I started doing work. So [my second husband] is totally different. He's...very, very supportive and always encourages me to do better. It's such a strong support base. (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)

Early when I started and I moved out here I had no family so it wasn't like there was anybody there supporting me other than my own internal drive and determination to do the best that I can and do what I have to do. (P7, personal communication, December 15, 2006)

They actually hid the information about aeronautics. They didn't want me to do that. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

You didn't really have a lot of support [in flight school] because if you didn't fly that meant somebody else got the time. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

When my ex started his own business, he needed a Stepford wife, he needed a solid income that I provided, for good credit, he need a trophy for entertaining, and he needed a good parent for his children because he didn't see them much. And I needed - at that point in my career I was a first line manager - I needed to be well grounded and supported. I needed that constant advice and it wasn't until I left him that I started leaning so much on my dad and having those lengthy conversations because I could. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

### *Lack of Experience/Education*

The lack of experience or education was a theme disclosed by 4 of the 13 participants (31%). Their insights indicated the challenges they faced early in their careers from the lack of specific experience and education. Excerpts are given to illustrate these points:

The one obstacle that I did experience and that I would give someone advice on is - I never took a sales job. I've had all kinds of jobs except for sales. Today you can't really run a P&L without sales experience. I mean no one is going to give it to you, unless you luck into it. Most of the time you really need sales experience, that

negotiation with the customer. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

If I were to do it again I probably would have...if I could change my career, my initial BS degree, I probably would get something more in business. (P10, personal communication, January 18, 2007)

When I joined this company I didn't have an MBA. I didn't go to Wharton. My undergraduate proficiency was dance. I was an educator. I went into my manager, who now that I look back was probably just making \$10 more than me an hour, but he was a guy and a lead rep and a senior person and he had an MBA. I said to him do I need to go back to school and get an MBA because I want people to respect my business decisions and respect my leadership abilities....He picked up my calendar, my book - at the time we didn't have PDAs - and held it up and said this is your MBA. You are learning right here on the job. No you don't need to go back to school. If you want to go, because IBM had a tuition reimbursement program, I'll support you but no you don't need it. I strongly agree that you don't have to get an MBA, but I tell you back then I was feeling a little insecure. IBM is full of very, very, very smart people and they know how to make you feel insecure when they start talking about how to rate the net depreciation and things that would just roll off their tongues. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

I think when you get in front of executive management a level or two up from you, the thing I learned over time is, this is what a lot of people do wrong - they tend to dive into the details. Because I know [my boss] so well, I never prepare. But if I'm going to meet with his boss, I need to take a step back. What is the goal that you want to convey? That was an obstacle earlier in my career. I had some of those opportunities but I blew it because I'd be so into the details of the answer versus kind of taking a step back and thinking about the question, and having a discussion about the strategic and then using a couple of the details to fill in and support the points. Don't go through the whole detail. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

Talking to the press was not fun. To me, it was all downside. You have to be dressed and get quoted, and I'm going to get fired. We worked with this fabulous lady who does PR and she taught me how to message. That was one of the best learning experiences I had. She taught me how to message and how to redirect conversation. Most of the interviews we did were over the phone, so she'd be in the background and she'd be writing and saying make that point. It was really hard to focus, she'd be all over, but it was really good coaching. It helped me overcome that obstacle. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

### *Upbringing*

Upbringing was a theme expressed by 3 of the 13 participants (23%) as presenting challenges to be overcome. The participants all acknowledged having little money for

education and also having little information available to them about educational choices after high school. Excerpts follow:

I was the oldest of eight kids so there was no money for college. All of my family members were blue collar workers or farmers. So I didn't have exposure to college level and I didn't have any role models. I didn't know anything else at that point. (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)

Some people are really consumed with the pedigree of your education, what schools you went to and didn't go to. There are always those particular schools; you can't possibly be any good [if you didn't go to one of them]. Whereas, I went to community college at night, and then I got my bachelor's degree at night at the closest state university. Then [I did] the master's degree the same way, at night based on locality. I never felt it personally held me back but I have seen that attitude with people in my time, in HR particularly, where they only want to recruit at certain schools, or at one time we used to pay differently based on which schools people came from. So I know it's out there. Get your education any way you can. (P2, personal communication, August 10, 2006)

I would say that my upbringing, because we really didn't have money and my parents didn't have the education level that I didn't know enough about which colleges to select, and how to go about getting in there. It wasn't highly publicized in my all girls' catholic school either, as something we should be focused on. I had no idea. I was just focused on finding someplace that I could fly. In the end it worked out better for me, probably, but for my academic development, if I knew then what I know now, I probably would have done my schooling differently. I know I would have....[I went to] a two-year program at the State University of New York....The top thirty kids got flying lessons for free as part of this program, to the point where you'd get your private pilot's license so, of course, I had to do that because I didn't have any money. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

### *Organizational Change*

Organizational change was a theme communicated by 2 of the 13 participants (15%) as an obstacle to career success. The participants verbalized their thoughts on the fact that when organizational change took place, as in the case of their respective mergers, it changed the career plan they had in place and required reassessment, reframing, and a new plan for gaining visibility. The following excerpts offer details:

I guess one [obstacle] would be when organizational changes take place and it sort

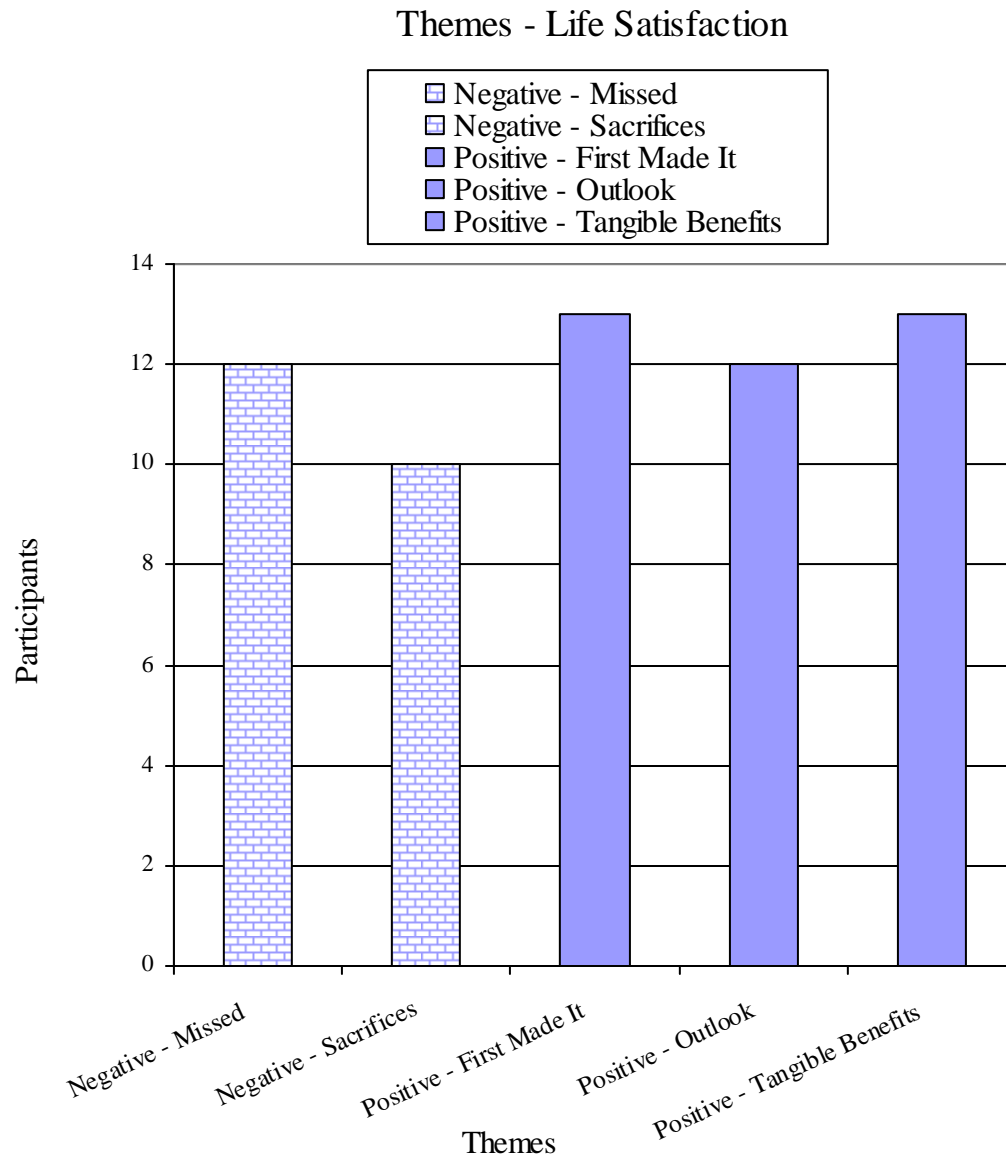
of resets the deck chairs. You have to figure out, okay how can I still succeed in this new scenario? We merged with the [ABC] Company. So lots of people around me took that as a major obstacle in their career and started bailing out like crazy, leaving the company, getting different jobs, worrying about this and I didn't. I took a different view of it and tried to look at it as an opportunity. I knew for the businesses it was the best thing that could possibly happen. So if it was going to be good for the whole business, there had to be goodness in it for the people as well. So I just worked as hard as I could to make it a success. (P2, personal communication, August 10, 2006)

The obstacle that I have faced in pursuit of my career goals is kind of the nature of how the industry has evolved. I was at [Company A] who got acquired by [Company B] who acquired [Company C] who acquired [Company D]. And so where I was with a pretty nice size company, moving up quickly was a little bit faster. Now I'm in this huge multi-national company where as getting on the radar screen is not as easy as it may have been. So while I may have been able to move up a little bit faster, my progression up the career ladder may have been or may be slowed down a bit because of how quickly our corporation has expanded. Also I went from a company that was headquartered in California to a company that is headquartered in [Texas]. And while a lot of executives have to pick up and move when they get new assignments, I've been very fortunate to be able to move up and stay here in southern California. My husband is an attorney and he has his own practice here so it would be very difficult for me to relocate our family to a new city. So that's a challenge – the whole mobility and being headquarter-centric. For a lot of our officers, they tend to want you to do a headquarter assignment and I just don't know how we would work that out....In career planning you've got to see the writing on the wall that says we're a [Texas] based corporation, and what does that look like?....It's not like the Chairman sees me on a regular basis, or the Chief Operating Officer. A lot of times in order to move to that very senior officer position that relationship is needed. So I'm realistic about a lot more accelerated growth; it's probably going to be very limited unless I am mobile or I get an opportunity to move. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

### *Research Question 3*

Research Question 3 asked: To what extent has pursuit of career success affected life satisfaction? Figure 5 shows the themes and frequencies identified by the researcher in answer to Research Question 3. All themes discussed by participants as being related to their life satisfaction are shown. Of the five themes discussed, two themes (what the participants missed out on while pursuing their career success and what sacrifices the participants made in pursuit of their career success) were deemed by the researcher to have

a negative affect on the participants' life satisfaction and three themes (how the participant knew she had made it, her outlook on life because of her career, and the tangible benefits she reported gaining as a result of her career success) were deemed to have a positive affect on the participants' life satisfaction.

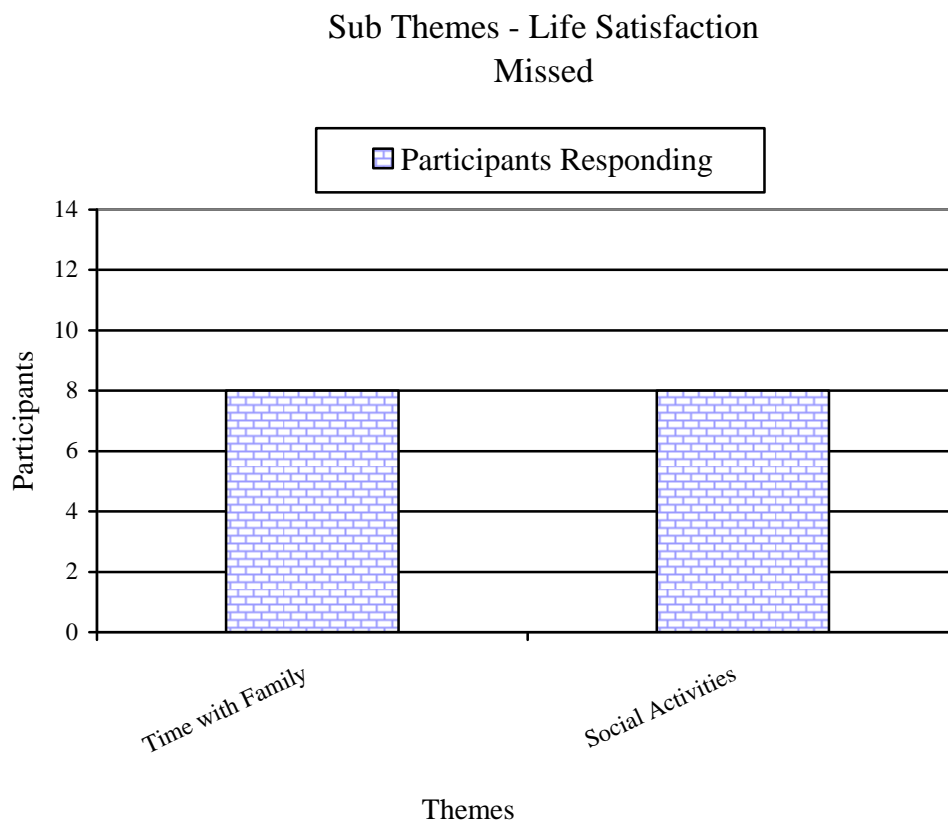


*Figure 5.* Frequency of response for themes identified for research question 3.

Each of the five themes is dissected further to reveal sub themes for greater explicative value. These sub themes are shown in Figures 6 through 10.

### *Missed Opportunities*

Missed opportunities was a theme mentioned by 12 of the 13 participants (92%) as having an affect on their life satisfaction. The participants noted examples which fell into two sub themes within this category (time with family and social activities). These sub themes are shown in Figure 6. Following the figure are excerpts that illustrate what the participants feel they missed out on while pursuing their career success.



*Figure 6.* Frequency of response for sub theme missed opportunities for research question

3.

*Time with family.* Time with family was a sub theme raised by 8 of the 13

participants (62%). Following are the women's comments:

If anything it would be spending time with [my daughter] as she was growing up. Then probably last year when my mother was dying. (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)

If I missed anything it's probably some of the everyday stuff with our families. (P2, personal communication, August 10, 2006)

I always wish I had more time with my children but I don't feel at the end of the day that I compromised my relationship with any of my children, nor do they feel that. (P3, personal communication, August 24, 2006)

I know there are family things I missed out on....I look back and also think well should I have gone back to work after six weeks with both kids? (P4, personal communication, September 12, 2006)

I missed birthdays and other key family events but I make these decisions with great care so I don't have too many regrets. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

I think it's a fair statement that I missed out on having kids and a husband. (P9, personal communication, January 16, 2007)

I think early on before my husband and I figured out how to work all this out I think the hours and places. And even now sometimes we are separated for a few weeks. When he travels, he'll stay here and then he'll go back home for a couple weeks and be here. I'm on the road a lot. But, probably the tough ones are sometimes you miss things that if you were living in one place, you know, you'd get to see more of like the grandkids' shows and that kind of stuff. That probably is the toughest one, or my niece's things up in New York. Those are the tougher ones I would say. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

I only get to see Jason at every blue moon, my five year old grandson. I missed out on those early years. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

*Social activities.* Social activities was a sub theme revealed by 8 of the 13

participants (62%). The participants recounted the many activities they feel they have

missed out on while pursuing their career success. Following are excerpts which explain:

Did I miss out on exercise classes or belonging to certain clubs - probably? (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)

There was very little time for my husband and me to be young adults, footloose and fancy free. (P3, personal communication, August 24, 2006)

I was miserable, I had no social life....I know I've missed out on things for sure, there's that. It's a choice, but would I do it over again? I think I would. I would do the same thing over again. I think about all the fun things that my husband and I [did]. We used to fly to New York for the weekend at the last minute....I just need a new pair of shoes, I haven't been to the mall in nine months....There is a choice with a career. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

Just because I have moved so much is having some stability of a social life. I would say I've missed out more on that....So every two or three years you're picking up and starting all over again, as far as establishing friendships outside of work, and contacts, things like that. (P6, personal communication, December 13, 2006)

The one thing I would say is just more time volunteering at my kids' school. I realize that I have a very busy and demanding corporate life and I can't be there so what I do is I write a check to the school as my contribution. But kids want to see you there. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

I used to think that when I was going through job moves I was giving up that personal life. I didn't have a boyfriend for a while. (P10, personal communication, January 18, 2007)

I cannot be as spontaneous in taking time off for vacations or social events. Everything has to be planned and I have to be very mindful of the work flow and what projects I have in the queue at any particular time especially when I am working with new business deals. I missed out on more social freedom. I never enjoyed spring break. That was always during tax season and that just never happened. (P11, personal communication, January 31, 2007)

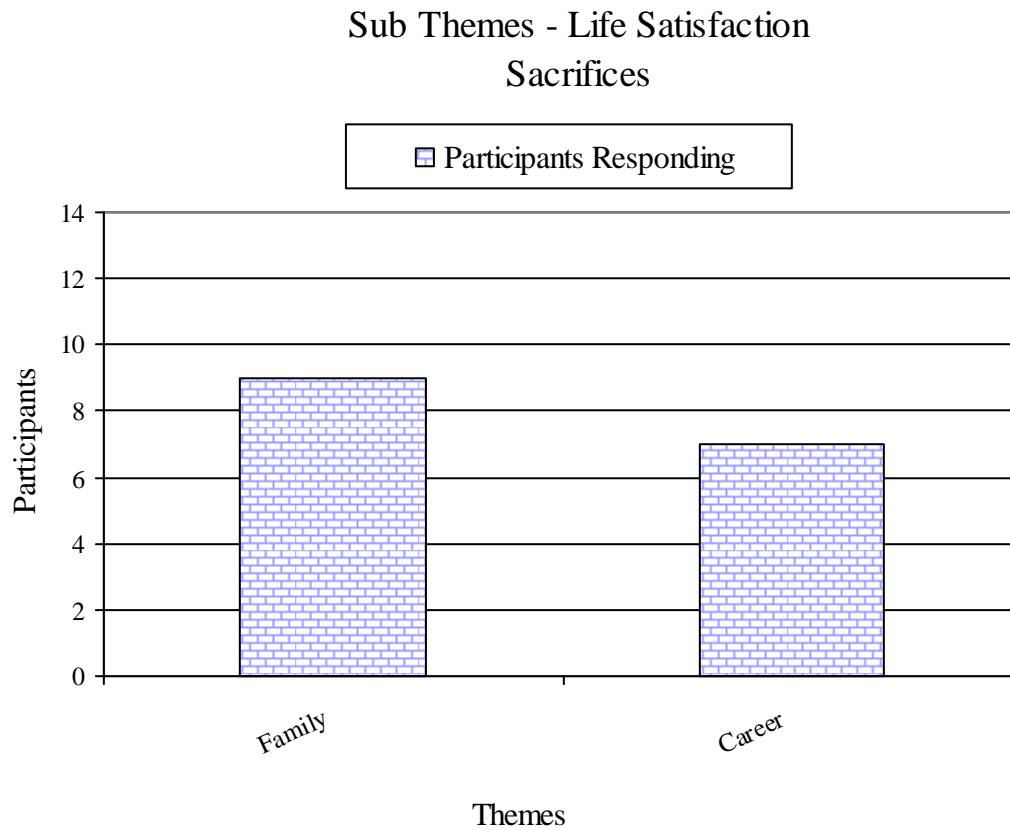
When I can't do my spa visit, I feel I missed out. If I'm too busy, and it is getting challenging, when I'm too busy to keep that spa commitment (and now I get more than a facial, the massage and the waxing and the reflexology – so it's a spa day), then I do feel that I have missed out. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

### *Sacrifices*

The theme of sacrifices was divulged by 10 of the 13 participants (77%) as having an affect on their life satisfaction. The participants recounted sacrifices which fell into two distinct sub themes of this category. They are sacrifices involving family and sacrifices involving career. Figure 7 shows the rate of response for each. Following Figure 7 are the



participants' comments for each subtheme.



*Figure 7.* Frequency of response for sub theme sacrifices identified for research question 3.

*Family sacrifices.* Sacrifices regarding family were detailed by 9 of the 13 participants (69%). Their comments ran the gamut from sacrifices made by their partners to moving the entire family or commuting home on weekends so as not to move the family to choices made by the women regarding having children. The excerpts that follow explain:

Early on we agreed I was in a position given what I did and what [my husband] did, that I could make a more substantial economic contribution to the family. But in order to do that there would be a certain amount of inflexibility in my life that was going to be the cost of achieving that and a willingness on his part to step up and help the family deal with the consequences of my lack of flexibility. (P3, personal communication, August 24, 2006)

We made a decision earlier on in my career, although I'm single we are partners, and we decided early on we were going to follow my career. We've moved four times over the last ten or so years to do that and he's made the sacrifices. (P6, personal communication, December 13, 2006)

We made the decision that my husband and daughter would stay in place and I would make the move and that I would come back on the weekends. It was kind of hard at the time. (P2, personal communication, August 10, 2006)

Choosing to live in different places. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

We moved quite a bit; I think we moved every other Christmas or Thanksgiving. (P4, personal communication, September 12, 2006)

I regret that [my children] grew up too fast, that my job required me to travel in those final few years of living at home with me. I made exec when my daughter was a sophomore, and by her junior year I was flying my mother up to Connecticut to stay with her while I would go overseas for a week or so. You feel torn. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

I regret sometimes some of the schedules that I've put the kids on. (P4, personal communication, September 12, 2006)

We adopted [my son] because I was too old, which was actually the first time in my life that someone told me you can't do something. Which was like, what do you mean, nobody has ever told me I can't. What are you talking about? So I think for sure I have missed out on that. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

Unfortunately, having a child which was something that I've always wanted, it didn't come for me initially. And I'm thinking it was never [going to happen]; did I give up anything? Because when it didn't happen naturally my husband and I said let's go to Plan B. (P10, personal communication, January 18, 2007)

At home, I'm definitely more in charge of more things but he does more than most men. (P7, personal communication, December 15, 2006)

We have had a tremendous reversal of roles....At the time we had a 1-1/2 year old. [My husband] has not worked outside of the home since and has been just a tremendous business partner at some personal sacrifice because he is an engineer/program manager, two degrees in engineering, master's degrees in engineering, one from Cornell. Of course he has some frustration....He relates to those stay at home moms, like some of my girlfriends. They're really tight. And I feel I relate better with some of their husbands. (P10, personal communication, January 18, 2007)

I would say I am divorced and probably my personal life would have taken a different course had I become a gym teacher. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

*Career sacrifices.* Sacrifices regarding career were depicted by 7 of the 13 participants (54%). Their comments ranged from sacrifices made at work such as not saying yes to all opportunities, especially when their children were small to postponing their climb up the corporate ladder until their children were self-sufficient. The participants were also concerned about the long hours involved in becoming successful, with excerpts illuminating both perspectives – from working the hours to become successful and from looking ahead and seeing how many hours the next promotion would entail. Following are the participants' words:

You have to sacrifice something to be successful in your career but if it throws your life out of balance because you are saying yes too much it is really not worth it in the end. There is no peace of mind. It does not prolong your happiness or your quality of life. (P11, personal communication, January 31, 2007)

The most difficult choice I had to make was before I took the job that I'm currently in, I was in a job that I loved very much and I was quite successful at, and I had been at for a long time, and a component of that job would have required me moving to New York. It was very difficult for me to make a decision to make a career change, as appealing as general counsel with pretty high stress was; it's a job I would have taken in almost any circumstance. It was difficult to give up on a big long ten year investment, in another career. But my family truly didn't want to move and we would have but that was too hard for me to take knowing that I was making a move, when they didn't want to. So I sacrificed relationships and a career that I had invested a tremendous amount in order to balance my family's desires with my career desires. (P3, personal communication, August 24, 2006)

I'm at the point in my career where I'm saying, you know what, I would rather they finish school here, high school, before I move again...and if it were just my husband and I we probably would have moved....I think [when] they're in college, you're not worried about being home at night, so yes I think that I still have a desire to move higher, move to something else. (P4, personal communication, September 12, 2006)

In this company you go up to another level or two means those people must be on the road all the time. And I'm thinking, do I really want to do that? As a parent, not

as a mom, as a parent, I see the trade off that some people have to make and I think it's a huge commitment. It's a personal commitment because it's not just about being in a different city during the day, it's about...when...you're at a certain level you've got dinners, you've got "the right" things to do....Whether it's team members, taking them out to a ball game for a thank you, whether it's customers, it's non-stop - it starts with breakfast and it ends with dinner....I am interested to take on more but this giving up stuff is you really have to start thinking about your trade-offs....How do they do all that stuff and maintain family? I think that's the biggest thing, the family. Then I think it becomes more of a two career thing. It's interesting, I think there are some women execs...some of my business school women execs who have taken that leap and have been fortunate - they don't have families. Or if they do have families, their husband stays home or their husband has a position that's more flexible, that doesn't have that kind of travel schedule. If you're going to have a family, one parent has to, and I'm not saying it has to be the mom, because it doesn't, so it's not my choice anymore, it's my husband and my choice. It becomes a family choice around it. Because there are plenty of women execs who have families but at some point what are you going to do about your family? One parent has to be around. When somebody falls down at the soccer field, you know, at some point you can't both be gone....It becomes a partner decision rather than an assumption that it's going to be the mom that does it. It's kind of cool that it has become that and that it's become accepted, and in enlightened companies, it's become completely accepted which is very cool. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

I was on a steady climb and maybe even a very low incline, almost a plateau for a few years, and that was okay. When my children could not tie their shoes and do their homework by themselves that was okay. When we got over the junior high years and they were in high school and they had to take responsibility. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

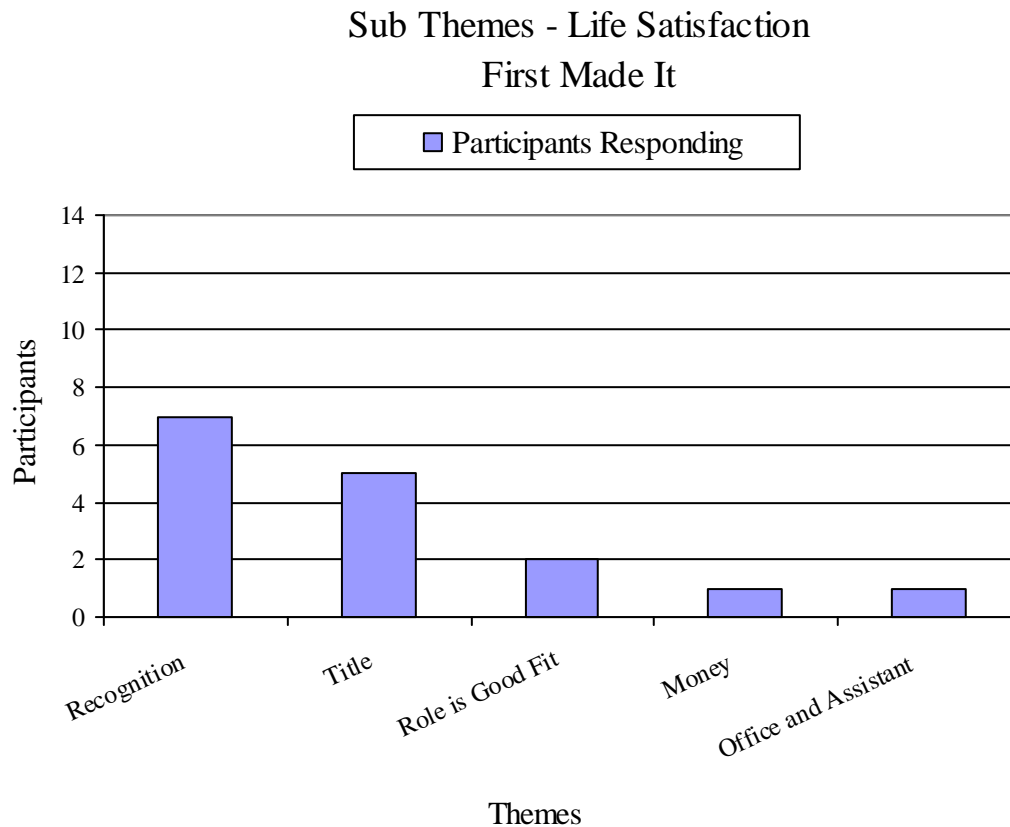
I subscribe to Working Mother magazine and I read those articles and I see where women have gotten. And I feel like they're up here and I'm down here but I don't want to work 80 or 100 hours a week. And so I'm happy with what I have. And I don't even know if when my kids get older I would want that. I decided at a very early age that I wanted a balance. I also heard that no one on their death bed has ever said "Gee, I wish I spent more time at the office." I take that to heart. I mean I love my job and I love what I do but it's a job. It helps to define who I am but it's not the totality of what I am. It's a piece of it. And there's this other piece, and this other piece, and this other piece. (P7, personal communication, December 15, 2006)

Earlier on in my life I probably worked more than I needed to. Now I think I'm in a very good place as far as work/life balance is concerned and I've struck a happy balance on that. So maybe I wouldn't have worked as hard when I was in my 20s, you know where you were working 80 hours continuously because I think I was working harder than I really needed to. But you live and you learn. (P6, personal

communication, December 13, 2006)

### *First Made It*

Realizing when they had first made it was a theme brought forth by all 13 of the participants as having an affect on their life satisfaction. The participants noted examples which fell into five sub themes within this category (recognition, title, role was a good fit, money, and office and assistant). These sub themes are shown in Figure 8. Following the figure are excerpts that illustrate what milestone the participants feel told them they had really made it in their career.



*Figure 8.* Frequency of response for sub theme first made it identified for research question 3.

*Recognition.* Recognition was the response most often given in answer to how the

women knew they had succeeded. Seven of the thirteen participants (54%) named recognition from their organizations, from their children, and from the media as positively affecting them. The following excerpts illuminate their feelings:

I was included in the senior leadership discussions, so there's a meeting every year that the CEO has and there's 300 executives that go – and I got invited. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

I was given this huge chunk of money to do the development and just the authority and the trust to go get it done, and do whatever hiring, recruiting whatever, without any real [oversight]...just give us a status update, just go do it. So it was a combination of those two events, it was kind of like, wow I think I've reached a certain level at [the bank] where I'm like okay I'm in executive management, at the bottom at the moment, but within that top tier of a company with 160,000 people. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

When I made VP. It was great to be recognized. (P9, personal communication, January 16, 2007)

When my 10-year old Googled me, and these pages came up and he was so impressed. I thought to myself Mom has really made it now, I can impress my 10-year old. The other one is last year I was interviewed for a couple of books and some sessions on successful women business leaders. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

The organization reached in and plucked me out before the deal went very far down the process. It had been announced that we were considering divestiture, so I got plucked out before that happened. To me, that was the moment when I knew that I had people who were looking out for me....So it was even more reinforcing and it was a big jump. It was actually a two level jump. (P10, personal communication, January 18, 2007)

Brings to me my current role of President and CEO. And being tapped by the Chairman to take on this role has got to be my highlight. In December of 2004 to have interviewed with him and to have created a confidence in him that I could take on \$4.5 billion global segment as reported to the SEC, and leading a segment for [our company], which is one of the companies that make up the DOW 30 was a big deal for me. (P10, personal communication, January 18, 2007)

I was hired immediately after the interview. With me not graduating from a prestigious university or working for an international or national CPA firm, I felt that them hiring me and taking such a quick liking to me within 2 ½ months after starting as a senior examiner. I was promoted to assistant field exam manager. I did not have all the big names backing me up in terms of the companies I have worked

for or going to a private university. I graduated from Cal State San Bernardino. It was not UCLA or USC. I did not have a lot of big names backing me up. They recognized the talent in me. (P11, personal communication, January 31, 2007)

The Chicago IT team said you know what; [your idea] is so good we need to implement it across the country, then around the world. That made me feel like wow, my little old idea that got me this nice commission is going to make a difference for people in Hong Kong and London, all over the world...and that gave me the wind under my sail. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

When I started being recruited for boards of other companies. I'd always been on lots of nonprofit boards and those types of things, but when Fortune 500 companies started recruiting me, I felt like that was a real milestone. (P2, personal communication, August 10, 2006)

*Title.* Title was the response asserted by 5 of the 13 participants (38%). Their comments indicated the positive affect of their new title. Following are excerpts:

I was hired on with the Vice President level from the other company and that was a nice achievement. (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)

I think that the day that I heard back from my boss and then read it across the wire that I'd been elected a VP for [XYZ Company]....That to me was a huge milestone. (P4, personal communication, September 12, 2006)

Probably when I first became a director....I knew that I had certainly struck gold when I hit that position. (P6, personal communication, December 13, 2006)

I think that would be when I made VP. (P9, personal communication, January 16, 2007)

I think there were probably three points in my career. One was coming out of my traditional work and being appointed in 1988 to the role of Director of the...Glass Center. (P10, personal communication, January 18, 2007)

*Role is a good fit.* Two of the thirteen participants (15%) felt taking on their new executive role was a milestone for them and had a positive affect on their satisfaction. They revealed the importance of the role as a good fit being more important than just acquiring the new title. Excerpts follow:

I would say from my earliest days, when I was a law clerk working for a judge. I enjoyed the work so much, and my relationship with him and the challenge of my

assignment that I think right then I felt like I had made it in the sense that I had chosen something that was a good fit for me and that I would be happy spending my lifetime doing. (P3, personal communication, August 24, 2006)

You're going to be the president and CEO of the shuttle starting as soon as we purchase this asset. It wasn't the title. It was really what the role meant, what that asset really meant, and the importance of what it was. It had needed. a tremendous amount of change and I've always enjoyed being in roles that were not managing something that was running well, but really taking over something that needed a lot of improvement and kind of starting it from the ground up. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

*Money.* Money was disclosed by 1 of the 13 participants (8%) as being an indication to her of being successful and having a positive affect on her satisfaction. Her excerpt follows:

When I broke into the six-figure income – that was when I knew, knew I had arrived. (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)

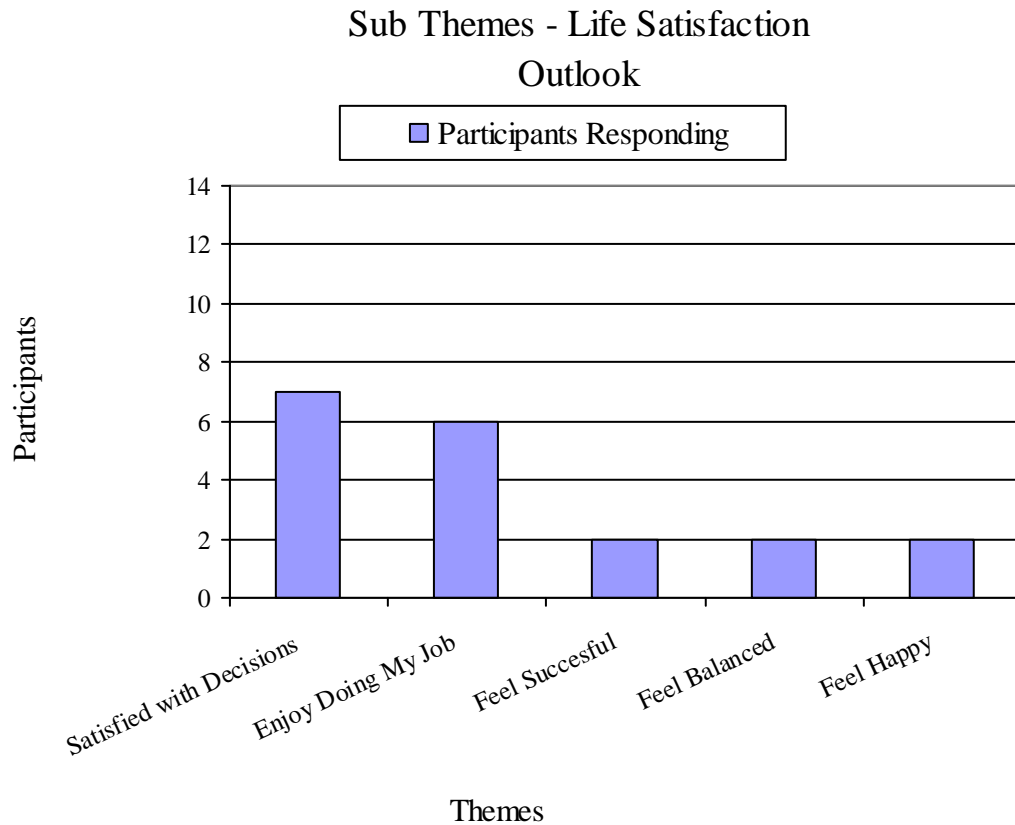
*Office and assistant.* Having an office and an assistant was disclosed by 1 of the 13 participants (8%) as being an indication of success and having a positive affect on her satisfaction. Her excerpt follows:

Other instances I can point to and say that's when I knew I made it - I guess having an assistant, having an office. (P7, personal communication, December 15, 2006)

### *Outlook*

Outlook was a theme mentioned by 12 of the 13 participants (92%) as having an affect on their life satisfaction. The participants noted examples which fell into five sub themes within this category (satisfied with decisions, enjoy doing my job, feel successful, feel balanced, and feel happy). These sub themes are shown in Figure 9. Following the figure are excerpts that illustrate how their career success has impacted their outlook which in turn has affected their life satisfaction.





*Figure 9.* Frequency of response for sub theme outlook identified for research question 3.

*Satisfied with decisions.* Satisfied with decisions was a sub theme imparted by 7 of the 13 participants (54%). Their comments indicated the positive affect they felt regarding decisions they have made during their career pursuit. Following are excerpts:

I would do it all again....I feel good about all the decisions that have been made. (P2, personal communication, August 10, 2006)

I have no regrets. I wouldn't do anything differently....My main priority has been to travel and I have done that. If you can match a job with your priorities, that's what is really satisfying. (P9, personal communication, January 16, 2007)

That's comfortable for me....For me that works. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

Would I do it over again? I think I would. I would do the same thing over again. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

I have been satisfied with staying in one position or place throughout my career. (P11, personal communication, January 31, 2007)

I feel very fortunate that I found a career and a job and a company that I enjoy working at. (P7, personal communication, December 15, 2006)

I made a commitment to IBM, quietly, a social contact, that I wanted to stay because we were going through a really terrible time since the dot com bust and everybody was getting offers, all these companies were going public. And I said I'm not going to do that. IBM stood by me through the birth of my children and the end of my marriage and I raised my hand and said I was mobile, and bam, I was at headquarters in three months. I'm going to stand by them. I want to be among those counted in the leadership ranks that turned this company around. And boy I'm so glad I did. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

*Enjoy doing my job.* Enjoy doing my job was a sub theme imparted by 6 of the 13 participants (46%). Their comments indicated the positive affect they felt while engaging in their job responsibilities. Following are excerpts:

I enjoy working with people....That's more the kind of person I am, more involved because I'm an operations manager and working with people and running different divisions. That is what I like to do. (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)

I like what I do....I feel very fortunate that I found a career and a job and a company that I enjoy working at. I mean I like coming to work every day. (P7, personal communication, December 15, 2006)

I've always felt that if I can leave a role or a job or an organization better than I found it and if I can help lift people to places that they didn't think they could go, that gives me great personal pleasure. (P10, personal communication, January 18, 2007)

I've always enjoyed being in roles that were not managing something that was running well, but really taking over something that needed a lot of improvement and kind of starting it from the ground up. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

Getting to manage people has been rewarding. I enjoy hiring people, especially girls right out of college, and giving them opportunities. (P9, personal communication, January 16, 2007)

[The most important factor in my career success is] enjoying what I do. (P3, personal communication, August 24, 2006)

*Feel successful.* Feeling successful was a sub theme voiced by 2 of the 13 participants (15%). Their comments brought out the positive affect their success had on their life. Following are excerpts:

I know I'm doing great in both places. (P7, personal communication, December 15, 2006)

At every level throughout, as I progressed, I would have victories large and small on the way that would reinforce that conclusion....For me making it was something I experienced in little bits that accumulated over time throughout my career. (P3, personal communication, August 24, 2006)

*Feel balanced.* Feeling balanced was a sub theme denoted by 2 of the 13 participants (15%). Their comments articulated the positive affect their outlook had on their life. Following are excerpts:

Now I think I'm in a very good place as far as work/life balance is concerned and I've struck a happy balance on that. (P6, personal communication, December 13, 2006)

I know how to balance my time. I knew very early what would make me happy. And being successful in my job clearly would make me happy but my family really does come first. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

*Feel happy.* Feeling happy was a sub theme verbalized by 2 of the 13 participants (15%). Their statements pointed out the positive affect their outlook had on their life satisfaction. Following are excerpts:

I'm happy. (P2, personal communication, August 10, 2006)

I've always felt that if I can leave a role or a job or an organization better than I found it and if I can help lift people to places that they didn't think they could go, that gives me great personal pleasure. (P10, personal communication, January 18, 2007)

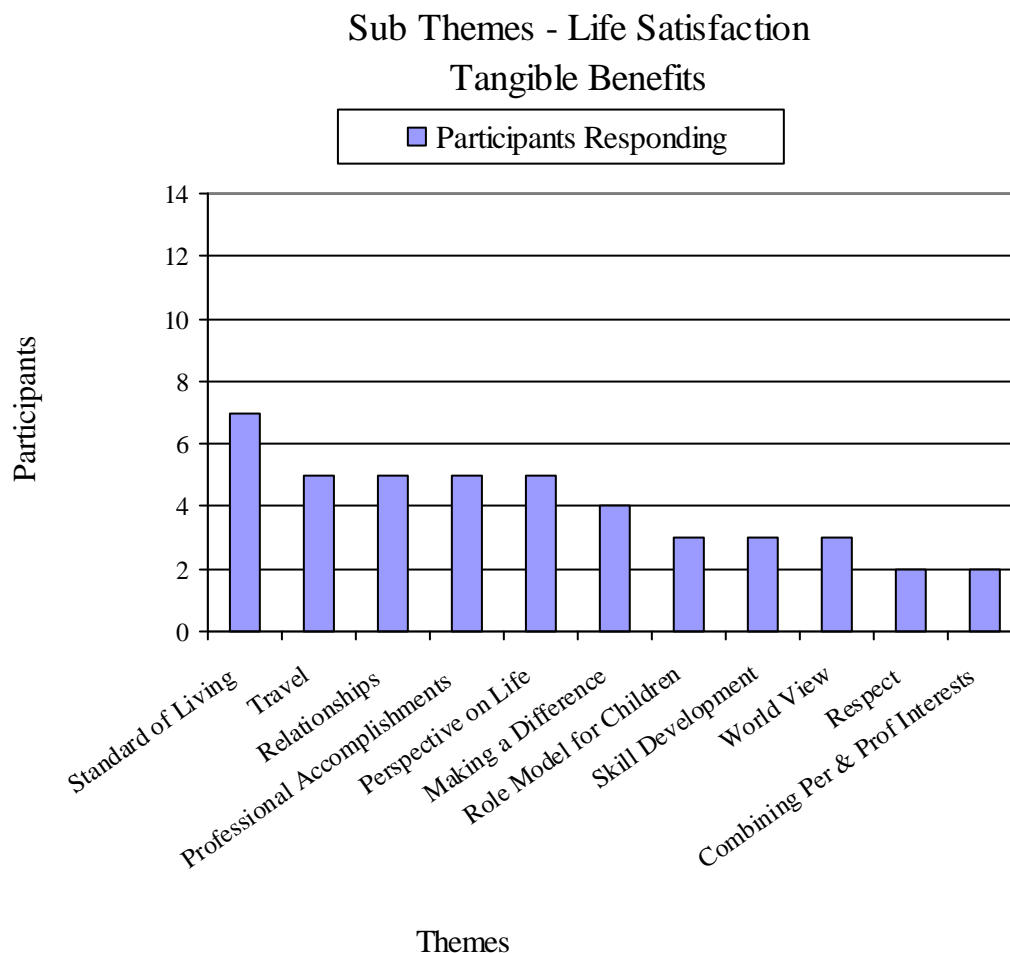
### *Tangible Benefits*

Tangible benefits was a theme disclosed by all 13 participants as having a positive affect on their life satisfaction. The participants brought forth examples which fell into 11

sub themes within this category. These sub themes are shown in Figure 10. Following the figure are excerpts that illustrate how the benefits the participants received due to their career success have affected their life satisfaction.

*Standard of living.* The participants' standard of living was a sub theme referred to by 7 of the 13 participants (54%). Their comments communicated the positive affect their success had on their life. Excerpts follow:

Income, a much higher standard of living, than what we would normally have. (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)



*Figure 10.* Frequency of response for sub theme tangible benefits identified for research question 3.

In so many ways my career has enhanced my life satisfaction. It affords me a great lifestyle....Financially it's been very satisfying for my family. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

Then also the money is good, so it makes life easier. I've got a good salary coming in and that would not be happening if you didn't make these other kinds of sacrifices. So when you do get leisure time you can enjoy it nicely because you have resources available to do it. (P2, personal communication, August 10, 2006)

I have had a lot of economic rewards and that has provided a life, it's not in the number one motivating factor, but it is something that gives you comfort. (P3, personal communication, August 24, 2006)

Financial security....I'm appreciative of financial resources. I know what it means to not have them....I appreciate having financial resources to help people when I want. Not that we're really wealthy, but it's nice to just be able to fly to Cleveland when I need to....I think that's what drove me into business rather than teaching or something.- financial stability....We're not wealthy by any means, but it doesn't drive any more decisions. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

My children did live privileged [with] private schools, vacations, every toy from Atari to PlayStation. They had themed Christmases....I knew I could make it on my salary, my stock, my tax deferred savings, even with my two children, if I never got another dime from my ex. I knew I could do it. I knew some two-person, two-income households that weren't making what I was making as a single divorcée. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

*Travel.* Travel was a sub theme named by 5 of the 13 participants (38%). Their statements put forth the positive affect that travel had on their life satisfaction. Excerpts follow:

[One way my career has enhanced my life satisfaction is] travel. I don't travel a lot but in all of the jobs I've had there's always been meetings to go to in Texas and Michigan where we have different offices....I like it and I like to be able to see how the other offices operate and to get to know some of the people....I consider it a perk really traveling for the company. (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)

[My career has enhanced my life satisfaction in] a couple ways. My career has had me involved in a significant amount of travel. (P2, personal communication, August 10, 2006)

I've been able to move around and live in many different places. (P6, personal communication, December 13, 2006)

First of all, travel....I have gotten to travel the world and I have stayed in the best hotels, had the best of everything. My main priority has been to travel and I have done that. (P9, personal communication, January 16, 2007)

Having the opportunities to travel around the world. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

*Relationships.* Relationships was a sub theme broached by 5 of the 13 participants (38%). Their excerpts pointed out the positive affect that relationships they developed because of their career had on their life satisfaction. Excerpts follow:

I enjoy working with people and I do a lot of things where I might take them out to dinner, or we might go out for drinks, I invite them over to our house....That's more the kind of person I am, more involved because I'm an operations manager and working with people and running different divisions and that is what I like to do. That's more my strong point. (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)

Meeting very interesting people. (P2, personal communication, August 10, 2006)

I've met some of the neatest people. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

Meet fabulous people along the way, make some great lasting friendships....Made me comfortable talking to many different people and to different walks of life and understanding how to get into other people's shoes....Clearly the people that I work with have added tremendous satisfaction to it. (P6, personal communication, December 13, 2006)

Spending a lot of time for the last I don't know how many years working directly with CEOs. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

*Professional accomplishments.* Professional accomplishments was a sub theme asserted by 5 of the 13 participants (38%). Their comments brought out the positive affect that their career successes had on their life satisfaction. Excerpts follow:

I've been able to say I've really accomplished a lot and achieved a lot professionally. I've never felt bad about that and actually it makes me feel very good and I like where I'm at. (P4, personal communication, September 12, 2006)

For me, it's always been important, a sense of accomplishment. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

Being able to prove yourself has always been very rewarding. (P6, personal communication, December 13, 2006)

Getting to manage people has been rewarding. (P9, personal communication, January 16, 2007)

[One way my career has enhanced my life satisfaction is] being responsible for other people's work and all the different types of personalities that I interact with among my staff, as well as my coworkers, mostly the people that I have to manage but I am managing their personalities as well as the quality of their work. I feel that has definitely taught me how to deal with many different types of people. It has taught me a lot about listening easily. And the success that I have achieved and the opportunities I have been given throughout my career. I think that I have realized I have talents and skills I may not have been aware of. I have been satisfied with staying in one position or place throughout my career. My skills were developed. (P11, personal communication, January 31, 2007)

*Role model for children.* Being a role model for their children was a sub theme introduced by 3 of the 13 participants (23%). The participants spoke about not only providing a model of how women can achieve in the workplace but also modeling for sons what a strong and independent wife with a career of her own looks like. The following excerpts illuminate these points:

I am a positive role model for my children, and they appreciate it and they get it, and that's huge. (P3, personal communication, August 24, 2006)

My daughter will tell you right now she wants to be a CEO. She's talked about it since she was six. She just thinks this is possible and probable. I do feel like a role model for her, absolutely. (P10, personal communication, January 18, 2007)

I know I'm already passing on to the kids how they can approach life, how they can be successful. I know because of who I am, I am providing a good role model for them not only as a professional and having a career but as far as even though they are boys, what women can do. I hope they'll seek out that sort of person for a wife. Someone who is strong and independent, that has a career and isn't your traditional wife. They'll call me Supermom, and I like that they grew up with that kind of role model. I have nothing against women that stay home; I think that's really good too. I think that's actually very hard but I like to be that role model for them. (P4, personal communication, September 12, 2006)

*Perspective on life.* Perspective on life was a sub theme named by 4 of the 13

participants (31%). Their statements put forth the positive affect that their career success has had on their perspective on life. Excerpts follow:

I think it's made me a better parent, and a better family member and a better community member, thinking about our neighborhood and the community center, the community pool. I just have a different view on options versus someone who may not be as involved outside of their immediate five mile surroundings because they may do something really close to home. This has given me a view into how things are driven....It's been a very good rounded viewpoint. I think that's important. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

I think it's a huge part of my life and it also has some element of defining who I am. (P6, personal communication, December 13, 2006)

I need that respite away from [my kids] to have something else to focus on, to help myself grow. (P7, personal communication, December 15, 2006)

I think getting perspective at all different levels in these companies that I've worked in. Those types of things to me have just been mind expanding, emotional expansion as well. So for me, it's just been phenomenal. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

You can't stand in the same river twice. It's named the same, and your point of entry may be the same, but it's moving, it's a constant flow so you're never going to be able to stand in the same river twice. That's just how dynamic this world is and our careers are. So every year you've got an opportunity to ride a new wave, listen to a new ripple, or catch a new fish because it's a dynamic environment in the space that we occupy and we've got to realize that we can't be constant and neither is this beautiful world. It's going to change. Even when it's bad, sometimes to just be still and let that pass. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

*Making a difference.* Making a difference was a sub theme reported by 4 of the 13 participants (31%). Their statements expressed the positive affect that making a difference in their career has had on their life satisfaction. Excerpts follow to explain:

You get to make a difference with people and with customers, and that's what it is all about....It's not necessarily about moving up anymore, it's about doing something where you can contribute to the organization. (P6, personal communication, December 13, 2006)

For me, it's always been important, what I am contributing. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)



In so many ways my career has enhanced my life satisfaction. It allows me to I think be a better person, to give to the community....My current job allows me to be very active in the community which I absolutely love [and] allows me to help other people. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

I do some formal mentoring, but I also informally mentor four or five girls. It has enhanced my life. (P9, personal communication, January 16, 2007)

*Skill development.* Skill development was a sub theme touched on by 3 of the 13 participants (23%). Their excerpts pointed out the positive affect that the skills they developed during their career had on their life satisfaction. Excerpts follow:

In the end you end up with a lot of skills that you involve in other issues in life....My husband and I are thinking of retiring at 55 and we want to start our own business, a winery. So it's like I have all the skills: HR, manufacturing, sales and marketing, organization – all these skills that you've learned then to be able to say now I'm going to take them and put them into something where we're going to reap all the benefits. It's like of all the time that you've put in you can end up with a satisfying end of life too because of it. (P4, personal communication, September 12, 2006)

I would say it challenges me, my career does, it develops me. (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007)

I think that I have realized I have talents and skills I may not have been aware of. I have been satisfied with staying in one position or place throughout my career. My skills were developed. (P11, personal communication, January 31, 2007)

*World view.* World view was a sub theme reported by 3 of the 13 participants (23%). Their statements expressed how their world view had a positive affect on their life satisfaction. Excerpts follow to explain:

I feel like I am very much in touch with the drum beat of what's going on in the world. I think it helps. It just makes for a more satisfying life when you have that kind of connection. (P2, personal communication, August 10, 2006)

It's enhanced my view of the world; it's become much more diverse. This has given me a view into how things are driven, a global perspective. (P5, personal communication, September 19, 2006)

Having the opportunities to travel around the world and see different cultures and how people live and act and think. (P12, personal communication, February 7,

2007)

*Respect.* Respect was a sub theme referred to by 2 of the 13 participants (15%).

Their statements depicted the positive affect that maturity has had on their life satisfaction.

Excerpts follow:

I'm proud of my position and the respect shown to me by my staff. And my family is proud of me. (P1, personal communication, August 7, 2006)

I enjoy the status element of it all. I command respect not for who my family is or anything else, but simple for what I do. That's a tremendously powerful thing. I enjoy it. (P3, personal communication, August 24, 2006)

*Combining personal and professional interests.* Combining personal and professional interests was a sub theme named by 2 of the 13 participants (15%). Their statements communicated the positive affect that being able to pursue both personal and professional interests has had on their perspective on life. Excerpts follow:

Being able to combine some personal interests with business interests, for example, being on the advisory board of the university that I attended. That's a nice connection that has helped. (P2, personal communication, August 10, 2006)

[My career has enhanced my life satisfaction] in every way imaginable. I am a very social and intellectual person, and I am in a job that requires, and encourages exercising those two attributes in concert all the time so I get a tremendous amount of personal satisfaction, on both a personal level and a professional level from doing what I do. (P3, personal communication, August 24, 2006)

#### Summary of Chapter Four

The data for this study was collected through the use of semi-structured interviews. The researcher and two interraters used content analysis for coding the data. The interraters served to provide reliability of the findings. The analysis was accomplished using the phenomenological approach as detailed in Chapter 3. No predefined themes arising from either the literature review or from personal biases were used in the analysis process. The interviews revealed significant amounts of data pertaining to the three research questions.

Clear themes emerged during analysis and were allowed to surface from any of the interview questions. The themes are presented again for review in Table 6.

Table 6

*Summary of Themes for Three Research Questions*

RQ1. Strategies	RQ2. Obstacles	RQ3. Life Satisfaction
Interpersonal Skills	Personal Characteristics	Negative - Missed
Support	Time Demanded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time with Family</li> </ul>
Experience/Knowledge	Organizational Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Activities</li> </ul>
Self Awareness	Discrimination	Negative - Sacrifices
Take Risks	Glass Ceiling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family</li> </ul>
Role Models	Stereotyping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career</li> </ul>
Communication	Good Old Boys' Club	Positive – First Made it
Team Leadership	No Role Models/Mentors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognition</li> </ul>
Confidence	No Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Title</li> </ul>
Career Planning	Lack of Experience/Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role is Good Fit</li> </ul>
Mentors	Upbringing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Money</li> </ul>
Assertiveness	Organizational Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office &amp; Assistant</li> </ul>
Flexibility		Positive - Outlook
Performance		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfied with Decisions</li> </ul>
Work Ethic		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoy Doing My Job</li> </ul>
Work/Life Balance		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel Successful</li> </ul>
Positivity		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel Balanced</li> </ul>
Mobility		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel Happy</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking</li> <li>• Integrity</li> <li>• Patience</li> <li>• Time Management</li> <li>• Focus</li> <li>• Visibility</li> <li>• Perseverance</li> <li>• Lateral Moves</li> <li>• Understand Org Goals</li> </ul>		Positive - Tangible Benefits
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standard of Living</li> <li>• Travel</li> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Prof Accomplishments</li> <li>• Perspective on Life</li> <li>• Making a Difference</li> <li>• Role Model</li> <li>• Skill Development</li> <li>• World View</li> <li>• Respect</li> <li>• Personal &amp; Prof Interests</li> </ul>

The themes were identified, frequencies of response given, presented in Pareto charts for clarity, and illustrated with excerpts from the interviews. A discussion of themes and their implications is presented in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER FIVE

*Every single inch of ground that a woman stands upon today has been gained  
by the hard work of some little handful of women of the past.*

Susan B. Anthony (Sherr & Anthony) 1995

### Introduction

The high achieving women who participated in this research have forged successful careers through hard work, perseverance, and much help from supporters, mentors, and advocates. Their achievements have opened the door for more women to pursue their dreams of career success. Their willingness to share their experiences serves to propel up-and-coming women to new career heights.

This chapter presents a summary of the study and a discussion of the findings, with a look at the implications for various groups. In addition, recommendations are given for future research and a few closing thoughts are imparted.

### Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to define the success strategies of high achieving women in the field of business. This included determining what obstacles to success these high achieving women have overcome and how success has affected their life satisfaction. The literature review in Chapter 2 informed the research and interview questions and provided background information for the analysis of the data collected during the participant interviews. The literature review covered (a) the history of women in the American workforce, along with a brief on the social construct of feminism and trends in workforce issues; (b) an overview of leadership theory and a comparison of men's and women's leadership styles; (c) obstacles faced by women on their path to the executive suite, including the difference in perception of same by men and women; (d) the success

strategies that women have used to attain executive positions; and (e) an overview of life satisfaction detailing its three components: fulfillment, happiness, and well-being.

This study used a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach which examines the meaning of human experiences from the vantage point of someone who has actually experienced that phenomenon (Locke et al., 2004; Moustakas, 1994). In other words, the strategies of high achieving women and the obstacles they faced can be constructed only out of an understanding of what high achieving women say the strategies and barriers are. Similarly, to what extent the pursuit of career success has affected the life satisfaction of high achieving women can only be understood from the insights provided by these women. For the purpose of this study, high achieving women were defined as women who hold or have held (within the past two years) the position of vice president or above in Fortune 1,000 companies. Thirteen participants were selected by a type of purposive sampling termed maximum variation sampling to identify important shared patterns cutting across individual experiences. This method is intended to increase significance because the themes emerge out of heterogeneity (Isaac & Michael, 1995; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The criteria for choosing the maximum variation in this study included position title, industry, geographic location, age, ethnicity, educational attainment, marital status, and family composition.

To answer the research questions, an interview protocol was created and then validated by a panel of experts. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the 13 participants. Interview transcripts served as the raw data. Inductive content analysis was then performed by the researcher and two interraters to identify meaning units. The meaning units were analyzed and grouped into themes. The use of interraters helped to

ensure the reliability of the study. Results of the independent analyses were compared and a consensus of themes was reached with no substantial interpretation issues emerging. The findings were presented in Chapter 4.

### Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this study are specifically targeted to succeeding in one of the toughest climates in American business, the Fortune 1,000—a hotbed of hierarchical tradition that has dominated management since its inception. These findings have been identified with the express purpose of assisting women to attain executive positions and to gauge whether the attainment of such will provide life satisfaction as they define it. Following is a discussion of the results and whether they support or confound previous research.

#### *Results for Research Question 1*

The primary research question addressed in this study was: What are the most common strategies that women leaders report as following to achieve career success? The results of this study identified 18 major and 9 minor success strategies that high achieving women have used in combination to achieve career success. Major themes were reported by at least half of the participants and minor themes were reported by less than half the participants; however, were still deemed relevant to the study. The major themes identified were: (a) interpersonal skills, (b) support, (c) experience/knowledge, (d) self-awareness, (e) take risks, (f) role models, (g) communication, (h) team leadership, (i) confidence, (j) career planning, (k) mentors, (l) assertiveness, (m) flexibility, (n) performance, (o) work ethic, (p) work/life balance, (q) positivity, and (r) mobility. The minor themes identified were: (a) networking, (b) integrity, (c) patience, (d) time management, (e) focus, (f)

visibility, (g) perseverance, (h) lateral moves, and (i) understand organizational goals. Most of the themes were articulated numerous times throughout the same interview.

### *Interpersonal Skills*

Every participant discussed the importance of having the relational skills embodied in the theme of interpersonal skills, which was also referred to as “people skills” and building relationships. This finding supports the literature which found interpersonal skills to be important to women’s source of influence power in the workplace and therefore to their advancement, as opposed to men’s traditional power of position (Matz, 2001; Prime, 2005; Rosener, 1990; Tannen, 1994).

### *Support*

The second major theme that was mentioned by all participants was having support, whether from family or work colleagues. Researchers (Awkward, 2005; Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995) concur that having a support system is critical for women to succeed in high level positions and important in attaining life satisfaction (Donovan et al., 2002).

### *Experience/Knowledge*

Twelve participants discussed how important it was to acquire a breadth of experience and knowledge and to be able to transfer these skills to new opportunities. Research abounds citing the importance of breadth of experience and knowledge in attaining executive level positions (Brooks & Brooks, 1999; Catalyst, 2000; Catalyst, 2001b; Heilman, 1997; Hurley, Fagenson-Eland, & Sonnenfeld, 1997; Mumford et al.; 2000; Oakley, 2000; Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998).

### *Self-Awareness*

Self-awareness as reported by the participants ranged from knowing their own

strengths and weaknesses to understanding their core values and trusting their instincts.

Research by Awkward (2005) found that the women in her study “disclosed multiple strategies to achieve career success including becoming self-aware of their natural abilities...and engaging in critical self-reflection” (p. 100). Savage (2002) also advocated that women know themselves, their values and attitudes. Savage considered it vital to work satisfaction, which leads to life satisfaction.

### *Take Risks*

Of the participants, 12 talked about taking risks such as getting out of their comfort zone, trying new things, and taking calculated risks. More than 1 described a dare to be fired mentality. Cassell (1997) found taking risks in the pursuit of corporate goals is a skill which women are using to create a new paradigm of leadership.

### *Role Models*

Role models were named by 11 participants as being important to their success, sharing that they found it helpful to have multiple role models. Research by Levs in 2006 also showed that role models have a profound influence on women’s career success (see also Conger, 1992; Cox, 2004; Medina, 2004). This finding supports Ramachandran (2005) who found 88 % of women surveyed reported it was important to have women role models to inspire their future success. Interviews with 30 CEOs conducted by Piotrowski and Armstrong (1989) indicated they all had strong role models. Many researchers have reported the lack of role models as an obstacle to women’s career advancement (Briles, 1996; Weiss, 1999; White, 1992).

### *Communication*

Ten participants discussed the significant role of effective communication in their



achievements. Research has shown that women's style of communicating, which is very different from men's style, is an important factor in achieving success in today's diverse workforce. This study's finding confirms the existing literature (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1997; Caliper, 2005; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Fisher, 1998; Peters, 2005; Petrick, Scherer, Brodzinski, Quinn, & Ainina, 1999; Sharpe, 2000), naming communication as an important tool for women to develop if they want to achieve career success.

#### *Team Leadership*

Ten of the women interviewed for this study believed strongly that their success was due in part to having developed successful team leadership abilities. Rosener (1990) found women leaders strive to influence employee performance and commitment through team building. In a study of successful women CEOs, executives, and managers, Jordan (2006) concluded that these women possessed significant attributes which contributed to their success, including among other things, a penchant for teamwork (see also Matz, 2001; Peters, 2005).

#### *Confidence*

Ten participants stated you need confidence to be successful. Many researchers have found that confidence is a necessary trait in leaders; however, trait research has been based almost entirely on samples of adolescents, college students, supervisors and lower level managers [who were predominately male], rather than individuals in significant positions of leadership (Stogdill, 1948, 1974; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Northouse, 2004). Considering the literature on this topic is sparse with regard to women, the current study highlights a topic that should be given more attention by both researchers and women who want to attain significant positions of leadership.

### *Career Planning*

Ten participants reported career planning as helping them achieve success. Their advice ranged from analyzing organizations early in one's career to reevaluating where the woman is on a continuing basis. This strategy included considering organizational values and how they aligned with a woman's own core values and life goals. Research by Gallagher and Golant (2001) showed successful women took the time necessary to research fields and organizations of interest thoroughly and chose work specifically aligned with their goals so they could move upward into better jobs, greater responsibility, autonomy, and higher income (see also Awkward, 2005; Catalyst, 2000; Savage, 2002).

### *Mentors*

Having a mentor was cited by 10 participants as being very important to their success. Numerous research studies have reported the value of mentoring as critical to women's career success (Awkward, 2005; Brooks & Brooks, 1999; Indvik, 2004; Wellington & Spence, 2001). Research has found between 75% and 90% of successful women leaders report having had a mentor (Jordan, 2006; Joyce, 2005). Results of this current study showed 77% of participants reported having used mentors as a key strategy for advancement. According to groundbreaking research findings on women in corporate leadership, Catalyst (1996) found mentors to be even more important to a successful career than hard work, a finding that is in congruence with the current study.

### *Assertiveness*

Assertiveness was a major theme that was named by 10 participants, with explanations ranging from being proactive to creating their own destiny. This finding supported the previous research on the topic. In a study of women executives, Jordan

(2006) found assertiveness to be a trait instrumental to her respondents' success, a finding also reported by others (Agonito, 1993; Kirchmeyer, 2002).

### *Flexibility*

Nine participants described flexibility as a key success factor, noting that change was constant and the willingness to be flexible within this environment was instrumental in overcoming roadblocks and taking advantage of opportunities. Awkward (2005) discovered successful women demonstrated flexibility in their approach to work and in creating a balanced lifestyle (see also Caliper, 2005), findings which are in agreement with the current research.

### *Performance*

Performance was a major theme articulated by nine participants. The women explained that both producing results and the quality of those results were important to their success. This is in concurrence with previous research. Preconceptions that women leaders are less competent have meant that women must prove themselves repeatedly with exceptional performance (Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998). Catalyst (2001b) found the path women executives in the US, Canada, and the UK reported as their top career strategy was consistently exceeding performance expectations (see also Brooks & Brooks, 1999; Estrich, 2001; Gallagher & Golant, 2001; Higbie, 2004; Mainero, 1994; Morris, 1998; Morrison, 1992; Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998; Sutton & Moore, 1985).

### *Work Ethic*

The overwhelming sentiment expressed by nine of the women in this study was that of hard work being essential to success. This agrees with previous research, for example, Rosener's (1990) study which found women leaders' success to be due in part to their hard

work. In a six year research study conducted at Xerox, Corning, and Tandem Computers, researchers found that 65% of women reported having to work harder than men to get the same rewards (Rapoport & Bailyn, 2005).

### *Work/Life Balance*

Strategies to balance work and personal life was a major theme detailed by nine participants. Their strategies included setting limits at the office, pacing their career to allow for more time at home when needed, and including activities in their life that helped them relax and grow. Research by Ruderman, Ohlott, Penzer, and King (2002) found that balancing work and nonwork responsibilities had a positive effect on women managers and enhanced their management skills (see also Awkward, 2005; George, 2003). Mooney (2005) reported that balancing work and home is one of the areas in which professional women still feel vulnerable (see also Briles, 1996; Burchett, 2006; Engberg, 1999). This current research study established that balancing a woman's professional and personal life is an important success strategy and in this way extends existing literature.

### *Positivity*

Positivity was a major theme touched on by eight participants. Their comments ranged from expressions of believing anything is possible to the power of a positive attitude. Hesselbein (2002), Chairman and founding President of the Drucker Foundation, identified the lack of a positive approach as an obstacle to women's success that is internally generated. Given the paucity of literature on this topic, this is an area which should be given more attention.

### *Mobility*

The last major theme for Research Question 1 was mobility which was brought up

by eight participants. The overwhelming consensus in this discussion was that the willingness to move to a new location or department or organization was pivotal to achieving success. The willingness to move could be linked to the broader concept of flexibility in the workplace. Since the literature on mobility is sparse at best, this is a topic that should be considered in the future by both researchers and women who want to achieve.

### *Networking*

Networking was the first minor theme and was pointed out by six of the participants as important in their career success. In research involving more than 200 women who had made it within two steps of the CEO in Fortune 1,000 companies, Gallagher and Golant (2001) found networking with others was a common, and critical, strategy to reaching a high level of success in an organization (see also Awkward, 2005; Brooks & Brooks, 1999; Catalyst, 2000; Steinem, 1995). The findings of this current study concur with previous research.

### *Integrity*

Integrity was the second minor theme, acknowledged by six participants as important in their career success. The participants defined integrity as being honest, being true to themselves, and doing the right thing. Previous research identified integrity as one of the specific traits that clearly differentiated leaders from followers (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Northouse, 2004). Research by Awkward (2005) found that successful professional women were clear about who they were and what they stood for. The current research augments the existing body of knowledge.

### *Patience*

Patience was the next minor theme cited by six of the participants as important in their career success. The main concern of the participants was that women understand it takes time to make it to the ranks of higher positions. Patience has been documented as one of women's many innate talents (Peters, 2005). Gallagher and Golant (2001) found it takes time for a career plan to unfold and that women must keep their eye on a long-term vision. This study agrees with those findings.

#### *Time Management*

Time management was the next minor theme denoted by five participants as essential to their ability to succeed at the highest levels of management. While literature exists touting the benefits of time management and, of course, one can surmise that being organized with one's schedule and efficient with one's time would be effective tools for succeeding in business, this area could be explored in more detail based on the current research findings.

#### *Focus*

Focus was another minor theme imparted by five participants. The women's thoughts on this dimension ranged from focusing on the big picture not the details to focusing on what they were doing at that moment. Gallagher and Golant (2001) found while men consistently focused on positioning themselves for their next move in their career, women tended to focus on the present and their current performance and did not seek out information pertinent to their future. The women interviewed in this current study concurred; however, they viewed focus not as a limitation but as a strategy which would eventually lead them to success.

#### *Visibility*

Visibility was another minor theme broached by five participants whose insights on this topic centered on gaining exposure in their organizations for the purpose of branding themselves and attaining recognition. Catalyst (2001b) surveyed women executives in the US, Canada, and the UK about their top career strategies and found seeking difficult or highly visible job assignments to be one of the top advancement strategies (see also Catalyst, 2000; Oakley, 2000; Smith, 2005; Tannen, 1994). Wellington and Spence (2001) found if women fail to showcase their talents and accomplishments, decision-making leaders in positions of power will fail to think of them for opportunities of promotion. On this point, the current study corroborates previous research.

#### *Perseverance*

Perseverance was another theme offered by four of the participants who explained that it took a lot of hard work and even setbacks to get where they are today and that women must stick with it to prevail. Gallagher's study (1996) of 70 women executives across the United States found that the average length of time it took them to reach the executive suites in their companies was 11.5 years. From this we can deduce that perseverance was necessary. The women in the current study consciously committed to the effort involved as illustrated in this comment: "It really is a journey and you have to be committed to that journey...people fail because they want to fast forward without wanting to do a lot of the hard work in between" (P8, personal communication, January 4, 2007). From this discussion it appears that the current study augments the current literature on success strategies.

#### *Lateral Moves*

Lateral moves was another minor theme asserted by four participants. While this

theme seems to be a subset of career planning, the participants were very clear that this particular strategy is one that women do not usually think of or allow themselves to do. The participants stressed what a positive difference this strategy had made in their career success. While research on this particular topic seems sparse, there is a brief mention in an article for the *Phoenix Business Journal* (“Career Success,” 1995) which states that employees may need to move laterally, taking time out to gain needed skills and undertake new responsibilities within their job before they can ascend to a higher position. While the advantage of gaining a breadth of experience has already been discussed, this finding focuses on allowing oneself to take a lateral position rather than a promotion to gain the benefits. The current study adds to the body of knowledge on lateral moves as a strategy for advancement.

#### *Understanding Organizational Goals*

Understanding organizational goals was the last minor theme and was touched on by two of the participants who advised taking the time initially to understand what the company goals are so they can be addressed in personal plans for the future. Research by Gallagher and Golant (2001) shows successful women take the time necessary to understand organizations and choose work specifically aligned with their goals so they can move upward into better jobs, greater responsibility, autonomy, and higher income (see also Catalyst, 2000). Therefore, this current research supports the literature on this topic.

#### *Summary of Themes for Research Question 1*

As the previous discussion pointed out, the findings of this study overwhelmingly support previous research on the success strategies of high achieving women. All success strategies named in previous research were also reported in this current study. Of the 27



themes reported in this study, several augmented the sparse body of literature existing on the topic as a success strategy for women (integrity, perseverance, and lateral moves). Several themes inferred an area in need of further research with regard to how women use these as strategies (confidence, positivity, mobility, and time management). Of the 27 themes, only one contradicted a portion of what the literature has portrayed. For the theme of focus, research found that men consistently focused on positioning themselves for their next move in their career and women tended to focus on the present and their current performance. While this current study found women do tend to focus on the present, the participants viewed this not as a limitation but as a strategy because it allowed them to deliver the impeccable results that were necessary for them to achieve higher positions.

### *Results for Research Question 2*

To fully understand the context of the workplace in which the reported strategies are said to work, one must ascertain: What obstacles to career success do women leaders report as having overcome and how has this been accomplished? Illuminating the obstacles women may face on their road to career success serves to forewarn women who may then choose to implement applicable strategies which are known to work rather than struggling on their own to overcome them. For the most part, the strategies named to overcome the obstacles were those previously reported as general success strategies. There were 12 themes (obstacles) identified: (a) personal characteristics, (b) time demanded, (c) organizational politics, (d) discrimination, (e) glass ceiling, (e) stereotyping, (f) good old boys' club, (g) no role models/mentors, (h) no support, (i) lack of experience/education, (j) upbringing, and (k) organizational change.

#### *Personal Characteristics*

Personal characteristics was the theme most reported as an obstacle by participants. This theme was discussed by nine of the participants who raised concerns about traits which they felt held them back such as a lack of self-confidence or being risk averse to worrying about pleasing people or comparing their career success to that of others. Research by Frankel (2004) reported on the tendency of women striving to please others which she stated was an internal obstacle to career success (see also Agonito, 1993). Much of the research on the distinguishing characteristics of leaders describes characteristics in opposition to the ones named as obstacles by the participants (Stogdill, 1948, 1974; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Northouse, 2004). If women report not having confidence or being risk averse, then they in fact would not be considered to have the traits of a leader and not having these traits would be considered an obstacle to achieving success. The findings for this theme support previous research.

#### *Time Demanded*

Time demanded was a theme touched on by seven participants who revealed how difficult it is to work the number of hours their positions demand and still find time for their families and their personal needs. Research has shown that women have typically avoided positions that required travel or long hours because of the responsibilities of raising their children and these decisions have cost them in terms of both lost raises and lost opportunities to keep pace with their male coworkers (Bernstein, 2004; Briles, 1996; Catalyst, 1998; Edson, 1988; Herman, 1999; Hewlett, 2002; Higbie, 2004; Mayer, 2004; Opdycke, 2000; Ragins et al., 1998; Talerico, 2000). The findings of the current study are in agreement with this previous research.

#### *Organizational Politics*

Organizational politics was a theme disclosed by seven participants. Their insights indicated the difficulty of trying to navigate the political intricacies surrounding their career journeys. At the top levels of management, differences between executives are so small that promotions must be handed out based on another set of values, that of power or politics (Gallagher, 2001; Savage, 2002; Shoars, 2005). Competition for power or position can take place between women and men and also between women. Some women in top leadership positions feel threatened by competition from other women, are used to being the token woman, and as a result are more critical and less supportive of other women (Higbie, 2004; Mooney, 2005). According to Schaeff (1992), many women actively try to destroy their competition believing there is not enough room at the top for too many successful women. Schaeff calls this the “Queen Bee” syndrome. The findings revealed in this current study correspond to the findings in the literature.

### *Discrimination*

Discrimination was a theme voiced by six of the participants as an obstacle to career success. The participants described discrimination based on gender, race, and age. They acknowledged that discrimination had been perpetrated by both men and women. The literature has documented discrimination against women since their earliest forays into the workplace and documents the continuing practice (Burchett, 2006; Catalyst, 1998; Estrich, 2001; Herman, 1999; NOW, 2006; Opdycke, 2000; Ragins et al., 1998; Twomey, 2005; Yukl, 2002). The pleasant surprise in the current study is not that the findings are in agreement with the literature, but that less than half the participants reported discrimination as an obstacle they had to overcome. This does not, however, minimize the difficulties this barrier still presents for women.

### *Glass Ceiling*

The glass ceiling was a theme depicted by six participants as an obstacle to career success. The participants alluded to the fact that men were willing to allow them entrée into certain domains of business but described encountering some difficulty moving into the top echelons. Research has shown the phenomenon known as “hitting the glass ceiling” is still a factor in holding back capable women from top level positions (Briles, 1996; Catalyst, 2000; Estrich, 2001; Falk and Grizard, 2003; Herman, 1999; International Labour Office, 1997; Morrison, 2000; Opdycke, 2000; Savage, 2002; Shoars, 2005; Twomey, 2005; U.S. Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995; Weiss, 1999; White, 1992). Sadly, the current research supports the literature that the glass ceiling is still in place.

### *Stereotyping*

Stereotyping was a theme put forth by six participants as an obstacle to their career success. Their comments revealed that many men still judge women by outdated standards that do not have relevance in today’s workplace. Research by Catalyst (Prime, 2005) surveyed 296 male and female corporate business leaders which revealed that gender-based stereotyping still persists in the workplace and that both men and women were guilty of these misperceptions (see also Agonito, 1993; Catalyst, 1998, 2000, 2001b, 2002; De Pass-Albers, 2004; Frankel, 2004; Gardiner & Tiggemann, 1999; Ragins et al., 1998; Schaef, 1992; Shoars, 2005; Steinem, 1995; U.S. Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995). The current study confirms previous findings of the continuation of stereotyping as an obstacle to women’s advancement.

### *Good Old Boys’ Club*

Good old boys’ club was a theme reported by five participants who told of their

experiences of being excluded by the group of older White men who made up the ruling party at their various organizations. Research has shown the higher up the corporate ladder women try to climb, the more promotion decisions rest with those who control the hierarchical power, the patriarchy known as the “good old boys’ club” (Briles, 1996; Shoars, 2005; Weiss, 1999; White, 1992). The findings of the current study are in congruence with previous research on the topic.

#### *No Role Models/Mentors*

The lack of role models or mentors was a theme voiced by five participants who spoke of the lack of successful women or men in business and in specific fields that were accessible to them to serve as mentors or role models. “When children see only men in powerful positions, they generalize that only men can be leaders” (Higbie, 2004, p. 78) “Great leading female role models are few and far between” (Friedman & Yorio, 2006, p. 25; see also Mooney, 2005). Access to mentors is often a problem for women (Catalyst, 2000; Higbie, 2004; Nettles and Millet, 2006; Ragland & Hill, 1995). Even today, men are the traditional mentors. When women look upward into management, they often see no one who resembles them. Unfortunately, in organizations where women can and do advance, there are just not enough mentors to go around (Wellington & Spence, 2001). The findings of the current study support the previous research.

#### *No Support*

No support was a theme acknowledged by four participants as an obstacle to career success. The participants described a lack of support, mostly from family, but also from professors. Yet the women persevered and through drive and determination found new sources of support. Research by Catalyst (1998) concluded a work environment that values

long hours over actual performance or that offers limited support for work-family initiatives is a barrier to women's advancement. Tharenou, Latimer, and Conroy (1994) found that families proved to be a source of support to male leaders' career advancement but a source of demand for female leaders. According to Schaeff (1992), many women find it hard to support one another's efforts. Research by Kiecolt (2003) cited the lack of support from male partners. The current research is in congruence with previous studies.

#### *Lack of Experience/Education*

The lack of experience or education was a theme disclosed by four participants whose insights indicated the challenges they faced early in their careers from the lack of specific experience and education. Research conducted by Catalyst (2001b) found one of the top barriers to women's success was the lack of significant line experience (see also Ragins et al., 1998). Hurley, Fagenson-Eland, and Sonnenfeld (1997) reported that top executives were distinguished from middle managers by the breadth of positions and departments in which they had worked. The current findings are in keeping with previous research.

#### *Upbringing*

Upbringing was a theme expressed by three participants as presenting challenges to be overcome. The participants acknowledged having little money for education and also having little information available to them about educational choices after high school. Research by Gallagher and Golant (2001) found women do not seek out information pertinent to their future. According to Schaeff (1992), a woman "is expected to be better educated and have a better job than her mother" (p. 86). Matz (2001) noted, "Most leaders are from better-educated, financially secure classes" (p. 56). She went on to state that her

research showed, “that children raised in middle to high social classes were more likely to be nurtured into leadership roles or at least given the opportunity to become leaders” (p. 109). Bass (1990) posited that children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds had a wider range of experiences and opportunities from which to draw. The current study does coincide with previous research on the issue of lack of money or education being an obstacle to overcome.

### *Organizational Change*

Organizational change was the last theme communicated by two of the participants as an obstacle to career success. The participants discussed their thoughts on the fact that when organizational change took place, as in the case of their respective mergers, it changed the career plan they had in place and required reassessment, reframing, and a new plan for gaining visibility. Research was not uncovered that reported organizational change as a specific obstacle to women’s career success and thus this study adds to the body of knowledge and illuminates an area worthy of further study.

### *Summary of Themes for Research Question 2*

There are many external obstacles and little agreement over what the top ones are. In some respects they are as different for each woman trying to succeed as the woman herself. The participants interviewed for this study named twelve obstacles as impediments on their career path. As the previous discussion has pointed out, the findings of this study overwhelmingly support previous research on the obstacles faced by high achieving women. Of the 12 themes reported, 1 was an addition to the body of literature on this subject (organizational change) and provides an opportunity for further study. It is interesting to note that not all obstacles named in previous research were reported in this

current study. Research exists on four obstacles to women's success which were not articulated by the participants in this study. They are: the pipeline theory, tokenism, pink collar ghettos, and pay inequity. It is assumed that these obstacles were outside of the experiences of the women interviewed or were not of enough consequence for them to mention.

### *Results for Research Question 3*

Perhaps the most important question asked in this study was: To what extent has pursuit of career success affected life satisfaction? The results of this study identified two negative and three positive themes which describe the elements their career success has contributed to their life satisfaction. The negative themes identified were: missed (time with family and social activities) and sacrifices (family and career). The positive themes identified were: first made it (recognition, title, role is good fit, money, and office and assistant), outlook (satisfied with decisions, enjoy doing my job, feel successful, feel balanced, and feel happy), and tangible benefits (standard of living, travel, relationships, professional accomplishments, perspective on life, making a difference, role model, skill development, world view, respect, personal and professional interests).

#### *Missed Opportunities*

Missed opportunities was a theme mentioned by 12 participants as having a negative affect on their life satisfaction. The participants noted examples which fell into two sub themes within this category, time with family and social activities. Research by Kiecolt (2003) found given the pressures of home life, the lack of appreciation for care giving, and the lack of support from male partners, it is understandable that some women choose to skip the little league game for a budget meeting. They are mirroring the behavior



of the generations of absent fathers before them. Kiecolt declared, “It appears that work has become a major source of satisfaction for women, as it is for men” (p. 23). Briles (1996) suggested that women need to learn how to say no to added responsibilities not in their job description and to carve out time for themselves. Research by Catalyst (1998) concluded a work environment that values long hours over actual performance or that offers limited support for work-family initiatives is a barrier to women’s advancement. Researchers (Edson, 1988; Higbie, 2004; Tallerico, 2000) agreed that the tendency of women to put the care of children and families first and careers second limits the entry of women into leadership positions. The current research findings of women missing family and social activities is in keeping with the literature surrounding the topic of tough choices which women make to become high achieving. Even though the women interviewed referred to the missed activities as a negative, they made the choice knowingly and expressed no regrets. It seemed to be just the cost of the opportunity.

### *Sacrifices*

The theme of sacrifices was divulged by 10 participants as having a negative affect on their life satisfaction. The participants recounted sacrifices which fell into two distinct sub themes of this category, those involving family and those involving career. Kiecolt (2003) used multivariate analysis to provide a snapshot of the factors that influence relative work-home satisfaction. The analysis showed that women are progressively more likely to find work a haven instead of having high work-home satisfaction or finding home a haven. Research by Stanhope (1997) found there was a price to pay, an expectation that non-work life would fit around their jobs. Women took on new identities, but the workplace and the men who control it have not evolved, which means many women still have to do the work of

their old identity (caregiver and homemaker), in addition to their workplace duties.

According to Burchett (2006), “Women are finding a more significant struggle with work interfering with their personal lives, than with their personal lives interfering with work. It is also clear that the more hours a woman spends in the office the less work life balance she has” (p. iv). Burchett goes on to explain that many women are taking work home in an effort to alleviate the imbalance that extended hours in the office can cause. Engberg (1999) cautioned that each choice made in forging a work-family equilibrium has its pluses and minuses and found that the best any mother can do for her and her family is to make her own choices based on her own values. Orenstein (2001) explained that women today face a series of dilemmas on the continuum between modernity and tradition that leave them in a state of flux, holding out for an ideal of shared parenting but anticipating inequality. Engberg (1999) insisted that women train their husbands to recognize the importance and complexity of raising a family and to engage in it as fully as women do.

Briles (1996) researched gender issues by surveying 5,000 and interviewing 130 women to pinpoint their major workplace challenges. Balancing work and home life was one of the most enduring challenges reported by the 1270 respondents. A participant in this current study revealed one of the sacrifices she confronted in the following quote. “So I sacrificed relationships and a career that I had invested a tremendous amount in order to balance my family’s desires with my career desires” (P3, personal communication, August 24, 2006). High achieving women and their family members have had to make difficult choices in pursuit of the satisfaction of a high level career. The current research findings are in congruence with the literature on the sacrifices involved in attaining high level career success.

### *First Made It*

Realizing when they had first made it was a theme brought forth by all 13 of the participants as having a positive affect on their life satisfaction. The participants noted examples which fell into five sub themes within this category: recognition, title, role was a good fit, money, and office and assistant. Stanhope (1997) cited the work of sociologist Hochschild who found that in recent decades a cultural reversal has occurred, in which the rewards of work have increased relative to those of family life. Many middle-class women came to the workplace in search of power, self-esteem, stimulation and identity. Research by Burchett (2006) concurs with the premise that women receive value and non-economic rewards from their jobs, noting that some women work because they must due to economic struggles, but women at higher-level positions who have obtained an advanced education work for more than the income. “Work offers a means of personal development, self-esteem and gratification” (p. 39). According to recent study by Catalyst (2001a), 67% of women surveyed said they would continue to work in some capacity even if money were not a consideration (Mason, 2002). The findings of the current study concur with the existing literature. The participants did not report working primarily for the money; in fact, only one participant named money as the way she knew she had really become successful. Most of the women interviewed reported non-economic rewards such as recognition and the role was a good fit for their strengths.

### *Outlook*

Outlook was a theme mentioned by 12 participants as having a positive affect on their life satisfaction. The participants noted examples which fell into five sub themes within this category: satisfied with decisions, enjoy doing my job, feel successful, feel

balanced, and feel happy. Research by Donovan et al. (2002) investigated what made people satisfied with their lives and found a rapidly growing body of research. One key finding was the existence of a “positive relationship between job satisfaction and life satisfaction” (p. 3; see also Burchett, 2006; Levinson, 1996). Research by Gundelach and Kreiner (2004), based on a statistical analysis of happiness and life satisfaction, found that life satisfaction was related to the respondent’s feeling of control and that social capital was the most important predictor of happiness. According to Hewlett (2002), “As a large body of research demonstrates, women are happier when they have both career and family” (p. 70). The respondents’ responses in the current research are aligned with the literature. Their positive outlook is based on being satisfied with the decisions they have made regarding their career and they love doing their job. They express feeling successful and happy. They also say they have established a good balance between work and family which they believe to be very satisfying.

### *Tangible Benefits*

Tangible benefits was a theme disclosed by all 13 participants as having a positive effect on their life satisfaction. The participants brought forth examples which fell into 11 sub themes within this category: standard of living, travel, relationships, professional accomplishments, perspective on life, making a difference, role model, skill development, world view, respect, personal and professional interests. Research by Donovan et al. (2002) cited a range of factors that influence job satisfaction such as personal control, variety, income, job security, skill use, physical security, job demands, and supportive work colleagues. Additionally, a positive correlation was found between leisure activities, spiritual practices, and life satisfaction. Hochschild (1997) found that for white-collar

management jobs, the workplace can be a pretty rewarding place. He cited expenses, travel, events, incentives and a feeling of accomplishment, which all contribute to this satisfaction. For many people, there is an overriding sense that work is the real place to be—where real things get done, where one has an important identity. Savage (2002) considers these job elements vital to work satisfaction: aligns with your core values, offers the right level of challenge with a sufficient amount of stretch, and has a corporate culture and environment that you're comfortable with. According to Donovan, Halpern, & Sargeant (2002) who studied the connection between work and life satisfaction, "People with higher incomes are more satisfied than those with lower incomes, and an increase in personal income does bring higher levels of satisfaction" (p. 2). Research by Mazurkewich (2004) found as societies attain a certain level of wealth, income becomes less of a factor in people's level of contentment. Well-being is determined not necessarily by your bank account, but by the quality of social relationships, enjoyment at work and job stability. In the Worthen (2005) study, the women executives reported their self-perception was measured not only as a professional woman but also as a mother and wife. Recent research by Ruderman, Ohlott, Penzer, and King (2002) found that balancing work and nonwork responsibilities had a positive effect on women managers and enhanced their psychological resources, social support, and management skills. The participants interviewed for this current research did report standard of living as the first of the tangible benefits adding to their life satisfaction; however, they went on to list 10 additional benefits which had nothing to do with money. All the benefits were in keeping with the literature on life satisfaction and the role of career.

### *Summary of Themes for Research Question 3*

As the previous discussion pointed out, the findings of this study overwhelmingly support the previous research on life satisfaction. The findings of this study show that there are drawbacks to a successful career in executive leadership; yet overall, the participants in this study reported more benefits than negatives resulting from their career success. Undoubtedly, some of the positiveness resulted from their general definition of success as including a wide range of determinants.

#### *Additional Comments*

The participants discussed some additional topics that were not found to speak directly to one of the three research questions but were pertinent to the overarching theme of women succeeding in the workplace. One issue raised was the feeling of just how far women have come and how things change from generation to generation. Culturally accepted gender roles have created road blocks which, over the generations, are eroding as illustrated by the following excerpt:

I think it gets better every decade. I think some of it is geographic, some of it is generational. The generational piece is probably the biggest piece. If you think about the fact that one generation ago from me...the women didn't drive cars. My mother never drove....They were the first generation here in America from Eastern Europe. My father didn't do dishes. He didn't cook or clean....He took out the garbage. He mowed the lawn. They had very decided things and it wasn't just a natural division of labor that they kind of thought this was half. My brother didn't set the table, but he took out the garbage. There were very specific roles that the boys would do, or the girls would do. So technology has moved things forward dramatically, but that generation, from that part of the world, in one generation of time plus moving to a different part of the world, suddenly you go from didn't drive a car to flying an airplane to being a president and CEO of an airline and now having a very large job in one of the greatest companies in America in a completely different field. Of course, my first job that paid, other than babysitting and Burger King; my first job was as a secretary. That's just what you did. So, it is an amazing thing to see that much of a change.

Where I see a change really happening is with the men who now have daughters. It doesn't really happen so much with your sisters, it's when you have daughters. And all a sudden these men are saying "hey wait a minute." Daughters should be able to do these same things that I'm doing and all of a sudden they start

looking at life a little bit differently....So, depending on where we are generation to generation, so in America it changes relatively quickly. It seems like a long time when you're going through it, but the reality is that's pretty quick change. (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

The excerpt touched on what one participant called "the bigger issue," helping men become aware of the advantages of hiring women, bridging the gap between what women know and feel and how men view it. Here is another look at the fortune of being born at a time when society was changing, when opportunities were opening up for women and minorities:

I have to say being born at the right time really makes a difference. I graduated when Patsy Mink was the first woman of color to go to Congress from Hawaii. She put forth Title IX, or the Equal Education Amendment. That was my senior year, 1971. To go to college when women had gone through the equal rights and birth control issues and to be a young woman when the world was opening up to women was phenomenal. To be born in the 1950s, with the civil rights movement coming in the 1960s; Martin Luther King died in 1968. I graduated in 1971 and the colleges were throwing money at you because they wanted to do the right thing, civil rights wise. When I joined IBM, IBM was opening up their hiring to more diverse talent, not just ethnically but women and people with education degrees, not just business. Comp Sci wasn't even a major then! They used to hire math and science and business, talented, degreed. I had none of that, but IBM realized if we are really looking for leaders, we're going to be \$100B company by the turn of the century....I was part of that growth, that transition, that new wave of leadership that was being developed and groomed....Being born at the right time can make a whole lot of difference in what opportunities come your way. (P13, personal communication, March 5, 2007)

One last excerpt touched on another point of discussion, what do we tell our children about what is possible for women in America?:

When I brought my grandkids to Washington, D.C. the first time, they were quite young and we were driving by the White House. They said to me, 'Can a woman be the President of the United States?' I said, 'Of course, you can.' And the younger one said, 'Well, then how come there's never been one?' There's the question of a lifetime." (P12, personal communication, February 7, 2007)

Most of the participants recounted how they were raised to believe they could be anything they wanted to be. How are the youngest ones among us being raised? Who are

their role models, their mentors? What do they think is possible for women in America?

The participants in this study answered many questions and imparted much wisdom.

Ultimately, they left us with more questions.

### Limitations of the Study

As with any qualitative study, one cannot say that the 13 participants interviewed for this research represent all high achieving women. Regardless of the diversity in sampling that these participants represent in terms of demographic factors, it cannot be said that their experiences portray the only versions of career struggles and successes. What can be said is that these women offer a coherent picture of achieving success which substantiates previous research, adds to the body of literature, and in one case, challenges it. Perhaps more important are the insights and practical suggestions offered by these participants' experiences for both women who are trying to achieve career success and to organizations that employ women.

### Implications

This study resulted in many implications that will benefit various groups including aspiring women, high achievers seeking life satisfaction, and organizations that believe retaining high achieving women can result in a competitive advantage.

### *Advice to Aspiring Women*

The most striking finding is the number of strategies (27) that the participants reported using to achieve their career success. Each high achieving woman detailed multiple strategies used in combination and over the length of her career. There are two essential concepts that have come out of this research, know yourself and seek out assistance from a variety of sources. In practice this means:



- Understand your skills, your strengths, and your weaknesses.
- Discover your own style and use it.
- Figure out what is important to you, your core values, where your passion lies, and concentrate your efforts toward these.
- Regardless of how busy you may be, take the time to develop relationships with others both inside and outside your organization.
- Find multiple mentors who can guide you through the politics, help you establish visibility, and open the door to opportunities.
- Maintain a broad base of support, both at home and in the workplace.
- Develop your communication and people skills. They will take you far.
- Seek out a breadth of experiences, a well-rounded education, and a depth of industry knowledge.
- Develop your leadership skills and a reputation for building great teams.
- Don't be afraid to take risks and think outside the box. Have a "dare to be fired" mentality.
- Seek out a variety of role models. Emulate the good ones and learn from the bad.
- Take time to prepare career goals but remain flexible to changing conditions.
- It takes hard work, high quality, and delivering results to succeed.
- Develop work/life balance early in your career and work hard to maintain it.
- Exude a positive attitude. It's contagious.
- Have the confidence to stand up for what you believe in.
- Be honest and trustworthy in all things. Be true to your core values.

- It takes time to attain career success. Be patient and persevere.
- Time management is not just for accomplishing work priorities. Use it to schedule personally meaningful activities.
- Be open to the possibility of moving locations or departments, including lateral moves, to attain long term success.
- Understand your organization's goals and whether they align with your personal values.

### *Advice Regarding Life Satisfaction*

What are the costs of being a high achiever in today's workplace? Is there a high price to pay in work/life balance, in relationships, in the decision to have children? All women who aspire to climb the corporate ladder should know these potential drawbacks so they can make an informed decision about their next career move. This study illuminated a long list of ways in which the participants' career success has positively impacted their life satisfaction. To be sure, there was a price to pay for success; however, the women consciously made a choice at each juncture based on their own values and those of their families. Every woman interviewed said she had no regrets about the decisions she had made on her road to success. Following are ideas that brought satisfaction to the women participants:

- You are the only one who can define success for you.
- It's not all about the money.
- Broaden the list of job related benefits that are meaningful to you.
- Find opportunities to mentor others. It is a chance to give back that can lead to great satisfaction and the rewards outweigh the time involved.

- Regardless of how busy you may be, take the time to develop practices that encourage reflection on core values, passions, and goals.
- Job satisfaction is a critical component of life satisfaction. Find an organization that allows you to express who you are and to make a contribution, an organization that is aligned with your values and a position that utilizes your strengths.
- Make time to enjoy the benefits of your hard work with your family and friends.
- Having a support system in place makes balancing work demands and home responsibilities easier.
- Find creative ways to be involved in the lives of your children and significant others.
- Keep difficulties in perspective. Keep the big picture in mind.
- Work hard at your career before having kids, establishing a reputation as loyal and hard working so there is less questioning of your abilities when your children are young. Resume career at full speed when children are college age.
- Choose a life partner carefully. They will have a significant impact on your career success.

### *Recommendations for Practice*

The findings of this study also reveal suggestions that are applicable to organizations. The women interviewed provided a revealing picture of the obstacles they have encountered. These now stand as a caution to organizations who can work to eliminate them, thus gaining the competitive advantage of retaining women leaders. The inclusion of more women in senior management can assist organizations in realizing

bottom-line benefits such as retaining and motivating talented employees, and increasing measures such as return on equity and total return to shareholders, which have been shown to increase for those companies with the highest percentage of women executives.

Following are suggestions based on the findings:

- Treat women as individuals, judging their performance and ability with the same measures used for male employees.
- Discover their passions and offer them opportunities that engage and challenge them. Work to develop their breadth of skills and experience.
- Provide women with challenges, stretch assignments that will help them grow.
- Offer a variety of mentoring opportunities, both formal and informal.
- Provide opportunities to network with others.
- Explore interest in starting a women's affinity group to offer education, support, and networking events.
- Allow women the chance to take on profit and loss (P&L) responsibility.
- Benchmark best practices from leading organizations regarding the treatment and inclusion of women.
- Promote the development of more inclusive promotion policies in the workplace.
- Tie performance goals and executive bonuses to attaining inclusion of women in the leadership ranks. Monitor and encourage the behavior.
- Do not underestimate the ability women have to lead.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

Although this research has revealed many interesting findings, there is still much to

uncover regarding high achieving women, the environment they operate in, and issues surrounding their life satisfaction. Based on the research findings and the literature review, the following recommendations for future study regarding high achieving women are proffered:

1. To expand the results of this study, conduct a similar investigation by quantitative methods using a survey tool. This would make it easier to include a much larger sample.
2. The current research could be advanced by choosing participants from fields outside of Fortune 1000 companies such as academia, government, and medium or small businesses. Also, how do entrepreneurial women differ on the issues at hand?
3. As a parallel to this study, based on the criteria used in this study, interview a sample of male leaders chosen in the same way. It would be interesting to compare the success strategies and obstacles reported by the men as compared to those reported by the women.
4. Another interesting area of study would be to examine whether the participants' definitions of success and life satisfaction are mirrored by a parallel group of male participants.
5. More research is needed to illuminate the differences between male and female leaders' perceptions of the obstacles women face in organizations.
6. Conduct a comparison of responses between Caucasian and minority participants.
7. Compare responses regarding different demographic aspects including, but not

limited to, geographic locations, age, marital status, family composition, educational level, or parents' educational level. For instance, are the findings for success strategies the same when reported by a woman whose parents had a college education as opposed to a woman whose parents had a high school education?

8. Expand the study to include additional demographic factors such as length of time at current organization and length of time in industry, looking for transferability of skills.
9. Conduct a longitudinal study of success strategies, obstacles, and life satisfaction looking for indications of changes in participants' responses as they age or attain different levels of positions, factoring in societal changes.
10. Investigate the relationship between length of time at an organization and the number of promotions attained.
11. Investigate the relationship between factors in high achieving women's upbringing and the strategies used to attain success
12. Investigate whether community involvement has a relationship to attaining career success.
13. Investigate how women's leadership style changes as they attain career success.
14. Investigate the contribution of playing youth sports to women's career success.
15. Investigate the relationship of birth order to women's career success.
16. In light of the depth of American involvement in the global economy, it would be interesting to see the study conducted in organizations outside the United States.

17. It would be interesting to try to validate the belief that women's leadership style is the best style for the global economy.
18. Investigate whether an international assignment enhances or hinders attainment of an executive position.
19. Broaden the sample population to include women board members.
20. Focus the sample population on just one industry, looking for findings unique to that particular industry.
21. Choose the sample population from only industries which are determined to be male dominated, looking for findings unique to that particular dynamic.
22. Compare findings taken from a sample culled from male dominated industries to a sample from traditionally female dominated industries.
23. A further area of research interest lies in determining whether there is a correlation between the number of hours per week that women leaders report working and their marital status and/or age.
24. Compare the expectations of career success by the participants with their actual goal attainment over a specific amount of time.

### Final Thoughts

I have a deep appreciation for the women who agreed to participate in this research. They were generous with their time and open in sharing their experiences. I was touched by their willingness to help others and by their enthusiasm for the project. The experiences related by the participants were both enlightening and compelling. The women were for the most part, prepared, having given thought to their responses ahead of time, and were diligent about providing information based on their experiences which would contribute to

the body of knowledge on the subjects at hand. I am truly grateful for their significant contributions to this research and for their contributions to women in general. It is my hope that their words will inspire future generations of women who want to attain the type of success that the participants have achieved.

Women's leadership and wisdom are vital in all professions. We need to encourage women and girls to believe in themselves and in the opportunities that are available to them. To do this there needs to be an exponential increase from the glacial rate we are now experiencing in the ascension of women to executive level positions. Both men and women will be responsible for this change. Education is the first step. Application will be the next.

#### Summary of Chapter Five

This final chapter is the culmination of several years of research. It brings together the research questions, the research findings, and the implications for various groups. The primary investigation looked at what strategies were used by women to attain the top positions in America's largest corporations. Secondly, what obstacles did they encounter along the way and how were these overcome? Further, this study has investigated whether these high achieving women were satisfied with their lives and career decisions, asking "What impact has your career had on your life satisfaction?" The good news is that every woman interviewed believed that her career has had a very positive impact on her life satisfaction. While there were many difficult decisions to make along the way, the women expressed no regrets. The findings of the study have been translated into advice regarding life satisfaction and how it can be obtained. The disappointing news coming out of this study is that there are still many obstacles that stand in a woman's path to the top positions in corporate America. The findings of this study illuminated 12 obstacles in addition to 4



more that emerged from the literature review. The most promising outcome of this study is the discussion of 27 strategies for overcoming the obstacles on the road to success. These 27 strategies have provided comprehensive advice for up-and-coming women who aspire to achieve the career heights attained by the interviewees of this study. Further, these 27 strategies have led to action items which can be implemented in organizations that want to garner a competitive advantage by retaining and promoting capable women.

While the findings of this study illuminated many issues, in the end we are left with many questions. These led to recommendations for future research which will help expand the work that is represented by this current study.

It is hoped that the impact of this research will be felt far beyond the boundaries of the corporation, region, or generation. Thank you to all who made it a success.

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## APPENDIX A

### Participant Consent Form

## Participant Consent Form

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Executive  
Corporation  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for your interest in this study. This letter is intended to provide important information regarding your participation.

Although 50% of all managerial posts are held by women, few women hold a top position in their organization. As part of my doctoral work at Pepperdine University, I am conducting research for my dissertation entitled *Defining the Success Strategies of High Achieving Women*. The purpose of this study is to define the success strategies of high achieving women in the field of business. This will entail determining what obstacles to success these high achieving women have overcome and how success has affected their life satisfaction. You have been identified as a high achieving woman and I am requesting your voluntary participation in my research study.

Your participation will involve an interview of approximately one hour in duration. The interview will be scheduled at your convenience and will either take place at your location or be conducted by telephone. With your permission, I will be recording this interview and taking notes to ensure complete accuracy of your interview. Please feel free to ask me to stop or resume taping this discussion at any point in our conversation. In the weeks following the interview, a transcript will be made and a copy will be sent to you for your review. At this time, you will be able to correct, clarify, and verify the discussion. May I record this interview? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Please be aware that you are free to choose not to participate or to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with me or Pepperdine University. In addition, you are not obligated to answer every question of the interview. The interview questions will be provided to you in advance. There will be no compensation offered for your participation in this study and no adverse effects will come to you as a result of non participation.

In order for me to use what I learn from you in my research and publications, Pepperdine University requires that I inform you of the following and ask for your permission. Please indicate your agreement with one of the following arrangements:

_____ (Please initial)	I agree to permit the researcher to use my name, my professional position and the name of my organization. I understand that prior to submission of this research for publication; I will receive a copy of the manuscript and review it for two weeks. I may then request revisions to any quotes/information directly attributed to me. If the researcher
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cannot accommodate my request, the researcher will then delete my name, professional position, name of my organization, and any other pertinent identifying information related to me and simply refer to me by a pseudonym and my organization as a “generic organization”, e.g., Ms. Jones, President of a medium size telecommunications company.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Please initial) I agree to permit the researcher to refer to me only by a pseudonym from a “generic organization.” I understand my identity and the name of my organization will be kept confidential at all times and in all circumstances any research based on this interview is presented.

Upon your request, I will provide a copy of any published papers, dissertations or professional presentations that take place as a result of this interview.

Research documentation will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s home. After a time period of not less than five years, the hard copies and audio tapes of the interview will be destroyed. To comply with the university’s policy for protecting human subjects, please know that there are no known associated risks with this study.

Please do not hesitate to ask questions prior to, during, or after the interview. I may be reached at telephone number or by e-mail. You may also contact my Chairperson, Dr. Farzin Madjidi at or. In addition, you may contact Dr. Stephanie Woo, Chairperson, Graduate and Professional IRB at.

Please sign, date, and return this consent form with full knowledge of the nature and purpose of this study. Your signature indicates that you fully understand and agree to the terms of participation.

Please know that you have my deepest gratitude for your time and participation in this study. This research will serve generations of women who follow in your footsteps. The intangible benefit to you is the legacy that you leave for others aspiring to achieve the career heights that you have accomplished.

Sincerely,

Leslie Evans

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Signature of Participant

Date

## APPENDIX B

### Human Participant Protections Certificate

## Human Participant Protections Certificate



### Completion Certificate

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This is to certify that

**Leslie Evans**

has completed the **Human Participants Protection Education for Research Teams** online course, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), on 09/14/2004.

This course included the following:

- key historical events and current issues that impact guidelines and legislation on human participant protection in research.
  - ethical principles and guidelines that should assist in resolving the ethical issues inherent in the conduct of research with human participants.
  - the use of key ethical principles and federal regulations to protect human participants at various stages in the research process.
  - a description of guidelines for the protection of special populations in research.
  - a definition of informed consent and components necessary for a valid consent.
  - a description of the role of the IRB in the research process.
  - the roles, responsibilities, and interactions of federal agencies, institutions, and researchers in conducting research with human participants.
- 

National Institutes of Health

<http://www.nih.gov>

## APPENDIX C

### Interview Protocol



## Interview Protocol

The purpose of this study is to define the success strategies of high achieving women in the field of business, to determine what obstacles to success these women have encountered and how they have overcome them. The study will also determine if a relationship exists between the career success and life satisfaction of high achieving women.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Position of interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Current industry: \_\_\_\_\_

### I. Introduction (briefly describe the project)

- i. Thank participant
- ii. Explain interview process, taping, note taking, and confidentiality
- iii. Inquire if participant has any questions

### II. Demographic Information

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Race: \_\_\_\_\_

Marital status: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of hours worked per week \_\_\_\_\_

Children (number & ages) \_\_\_\_\_

Education level: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's education level: \_\_\_\_\_

Early economic status: \_\_\_\_\_

### III. Interview questions

Q1. Can you share a story about a time when you really knew you had

“made it” in your career? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Q2. What do you think have been the most important factors in your career

success? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Q3. What strategies have you used to attain your career success that have

worked and what strategies have you used that have not worked?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Q4. If you have had a mentor, what did this person do to contribute to your

career success? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Q5. Who have been your role models and what characteristics do they possess that you aspire to? \_\_\_\_\_

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Q6. Who has been the most supportive in your pursuit of career success and how did they show that support? \_\_\_\_\_

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Q7. What obstacles have you experienced in pursuit of your career goals and how have you overcome these obstacles? \_\_\_\_\_

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Q8. Have you ever had an experience with the glass ceiling or experienced

discrimination because of your gender? If so, please explain.

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Q9. In what ways did your upbringing and socialization present a challenge in achieving your career success? \_\_\_\_\_

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Q10. What, if anything, do you feel you have missed out on while pursuing your career aspirations? \_\_\_\_\_

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Q11. What has been the most difficult choice you have had to make regarding work/life balance and would you do anything differently? \_\_\_\_\_

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Q12. In what ways has your career enhanced your life satisfaction?

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Q13. What advice would you give a girl in high school who aspires to attain the type of success that you have accomplished? \_\_\_\_\_

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Q14. What advice would you give a woman in middle management who aspires to attain the type of success that you have accomplished?

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#### IV. Closing

- i. Is there anything you would like to add?
- ii. Assure participant of confidentiality, if requested
- iii. Reminder about participant check
- iv. Thank participant

## APPENDIX D

### Invitation Letter

## Invitation Letter

Date

Dear Dr. \_\_\_\_\_,

I am currently in the dissertation phase of my Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership at Pepperdine University. My dissertation is entitled Defining the Success Strategies of High Achieving Women. I am writing to ask for your help with regards to the content validity for the data collection portion of this study.

My goal is to interview 18 women in leadership positions equivalent to Vice President or higher in Fortune 1000 companies. Participants will be asked a series of questions which have been designed to parallel the Research Questions.

Because of your research background and your professional and academic expertise, I am inviting you to serve as a member of my “Panel of Experts” to determine whether my interview questions adequately support the research questions in my study. Your participation will greatly enhance the value of my study.

As an expert, you will be requested to read through the 3 Research Questions and then to examine the 15 Interview Questions. In your evaluation, you will determine whether or not the Interview Questions accomplish the goal of soliciting the information required by the Research Questions. I estimate participation time required will be approximately one hour of your time.

If you consent to participate, I will email you a copy of the Research Questions, a copy of the Interview Questions and a worksheet you will use to report your assessment. After completing the worksheet, you can email your findings back to me. If you prefer, the materials can be mailed to you.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this important aspect of my study. If you have any questions pertaining to this request, please contact me at your earliest convenience. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,  
Leslie Evans  
Pepperdine Doctoral Student

## APPENDIX E

### Expert Panel Letter



## Expert Panel Letter

Date

Dear Dr. \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for expressing your willingness to participate on the panel of experts for the purpose of validating my interview questions. The purpose of this validation procedure is to ensure the interview questions provide data to answer the research questions of the study and will lead to the fulfillment of the purpose of the study.

According to the latest figures from the U.S. Labor Department (2005), 50% of all managerial posts are held by women, yet only 20 of the Fortune 1,000 are led by women (Levs, 2006), which translates into 2%.

The purpose of this study is to define the success strategies of high achieving women in the field of business. I will be seeking to answer these research questions:

1. What are the most common strategies that women leaders report as following to achieve career success?
2. What obstacles to career success do women leaders report as having overcome and how has this been accomplished?
3. To what extent has pursuit of career success affected life satisfaction?

To ascertain this information, I will be interviewing women in Fortune 1,000 companies with titles of Vice President or above.

The practical importance of this study will be to develop an approach built on the success strategies of high achieving women that up-and-coming women can use to develop their career path. To date, most of the available research on leadership and business has “been conducted on men, and written by men for the benefit of men” (Salas, 2005, p. 13). Surveys of executives at Fortune 1,000 companies discovered that women executives and male CEOs still do not see eye-to-eye on barriers women face in pursuit of powerful executive positions (Catalyst, 1996). This study will provide strategies for addressing the inequities.

Based on your expertise, I am requesting that you evaluate my interview questions in the context of providing data to answer the research questions in the study. The goal of the research is to allow the respondents to answer the questions using their own experiences as references. Please use the attached review form to rate the validity of the proposed interview questions. You may contact me with any questions that you have regarding this process. I can be reached at. I look forward to your response.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this important aspect of my study.

Sincerely,  
Leslie Evans

APPENDIX F  
Interview Questions for Expert Panel

### Interview Questions for Expert Panel

Research Question	Interview Question
(Ice breaker and refers to research question 1, possibly 2, and 3.)	1. Can you share a story about a time when you really knew you had “made it”?
1. What are the most common strategies that women leaders report as following to achieve career success?	2. What do you think has been the most important factor in your career success?
	3. Who has been the most supportive in your pursuit of career success?
	4. Have you had a mentor?
	5. Who do you regard as a role model?
	6. What strategies have you used to attain your success?
2. What obstacles to career success do women leaders report as having overcome and how has this been accomplished?	7. What obstacles have you had to overcome in pursuit of your career goals?
	8. How have you overcome these obstacles?
	9. Do you believe there is still a glass ceiling?
	10. Have you experienced discrimination because of your gender?
3. To what extent has pursuit of career success affected life satisfaction?	11. What, if anything, do you feel you have missed out on while pursuing your career aspirations?
	12. What has been the most difficult choice you have had to make regarding work/life balance?

	13. If you had a chance to relive your life, what would you do differently?
(Closes on a positive note and refers to research question 1 and possibly 2 and 3.)	14. What advice would you give a girl in high school who aspires to attain the type of success that you have accomplished?
	15. What advice would you give a woman in middle management who aspires to attain the type of success that you have accomplished?

## APPENDIX G

### Expert Panel Review Form

### Expert Panel Review Form

Please read the 3 Research Questions and then examine the 15 Interview Questions in the table below. In your evaluation, you will determine whether or not the Interview Questions accomplish the goal of soliciting the information required by the Research Questions.

Choose one of the rating responses in the columns to the right, marking your selection with an “X”. The rating scale indicates that in relation to the research question, the interview question is (1) Relevant; (2) Not Relevant or (3) Modify as suggested.

If you select “Modify”, please suggest how you would modify the interview question on the line following your rating. Thank you.

Research Questions	Interview Questions	R e l e v a n t	N o t R e l e v a n t	M o d i f y
Looking for themes of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ success strategies</li> <li>▪ obstacles</li> <li>▪ life satisfaction</li> </ul>	1 -2 hour interviews with women in Fortune 1000 companies with titles of VP or above  Transcripts will be analyzed for themes			
(Ice breaker and refers to research question 1, and possibly 2 and 3.)	1. Can you share a story about a time when you really knew you had “made it”?			
Modify as follows:				
1. What are the most common strategies that women leaders report as following to achieve career success?	2. What do you think has been the most important factor in your career success?			
Modify as follows:				

Question 1	3. Who has been the most supportive in your pursuit of career success?			
Modify as follows:				
Question 1	4. Have you had a mentor?			
Modify as follows:				
Question 1	5. Who do you regard as a role model?			
Modify as follows:				
Question 1	6. What strategies have you used to attain your success?			
Modify as follows:				
2. What obstacles to career success do women leaders report as having overcome and how has this been accomplished?	7. What obstacles have you had to overcome in pursuit of your career goals?			
Modify as follows:				
Question 2	8. How have you overcome these obstacles?			
Modify as follows:				
Question 2	9. Do you believe there is still a glass ceiling?			
Modify as follows:				

Question 2	10. Have you experienced discrimination because of your gender?			
Modify as follows:				
3. To what extent has pursuit of career success affected life satisfaction?	11. What, if anything, do you feel you have missed out on while pursuing your career aspirations?			
Modify as follows:				
Question 3	12. What has been the most difficult choice you have had to make regarding work/life balance?			
Modify as follows:				
Question 3	13. If you had a chance to relive your life, what would you do differently?			
Modify as follows:				
(IQ 14 & 15 close on a positive note and refer to research question 1 and possibly 2 and 3.)	14. What advice would you give a girl in high school who aspires to attain the type of success that you have accomplished?			
Modify as follows:				
	15. What advice would you give a woman in middle management who aspires to attain the type of success that you have accomplished?			
Modify as follows:				



The following space is for you to make any additional comments you think are appropriate for the study. \_\_\_\_\_

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Thank you for contributing your time and expertise to this study. Your contribution is greatly appreciated.

## APPENDIX H

### Interview Questions for Participants

### Interview Questions for Participants

Research Question	Interview Question
Demographic Information	1. Age _____ 2. Race _____ 3. Position title _____ 4. Hours worked per week _____ 5. Current industry _____ 6. Education level _____ 7. Children (# and ages) _____ 8. Parent's education level _____ 9. Early economic status _____
(Ice breaker and refers to research question 1, possibly 2, and 3.)	2. Can you share a story about a time when you really knew you had “made it” in your career?
1. What are the most common strategies that women leaders report as following to achieve career success?	2. What do you think have been the most important factors in your career success?
	3. What strategies have you used to attain your career success that have worked and what strategies have you used that have not worked?
	4. If you have had a mentor, what did this person do to contribute to your career success?
	5. Who have been your role models and what characteristics do they possess that you aspire to?
	6. Who has been the most supportive in your pursuit of career success and how did they show that support?

3. What obstacles to career success do women leaders report as having overcome and how has this been accomplished?	7. What obstacles have you experienced in pursuit of your career goals and how have you overcome these obstacles?
	8. Have you ever had an experience with the glass ceiling or experienced discrimination because of your gender? If so, please explain.
	9. In what ways did your upbringing and socialization present a challenge in achieving your career success?
3. To what extent has pursuit of career success affected life satisfaction?	10. What, if anything, do you feel you have missed out on while pursuing your career aspirations?
	11. What has been the most difficult choice you have had to make regarding work/life balance and would you do anything differently?
	12. In what ways has your career enhanced your life satisfaction?
(Closes on a positive note and refers to research question 1 and possibly 2 and 3.)	13. What advice would you give a girl in high school who aspires to attain the type of success that you have accomplished?
	14. What advice would you give a woman in middle management who aspires to attain the type of success that you have accomplished?

## APPENDIX I

### Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

# PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

## GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

July 11, 2006

Leslie Evans  
4804 Larwin Avenue  
Cypress, CA 90630-3515

Protocol #: E0706D04

Project Title: *Defining the Success Strategies of High Achieving Women: A Qualitative Phenomenological Investigation*

Dear Ms. Evans:

Thank you for submitting the revisions requested by the Graduate and Professional Schools IRB for your study, "*Defining the Success Strategies of High Achieving Women: A Qualitative Phenomenological Investigation*". The IRB has reviewed the revisions you submitted and found them to be acceptable, and you may proceed with your study. As noted previously, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project **meets the requirements for exemption** under the federal regulations (45 CFR 46 - <http://www.nihtraining.com/ohsrsite/guidelines/45cfr46.html>) that govern the protections of human subjects. Specifically, section 45 CFR 46.101(b) (2) states:

(b) Unless otherwise required by Department or Agency heads, research activities in which the only involvement of human subjects will be in one or more of the following categories are exempt from this policy:

**Category (2) of 45 CFR 46.101**, as your study involves survey procedures that can be linked to the human subjects, but any disclosure of their responses were not found to place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to subject's financial standing, employability, or reputation. **OR** as your study involves survey procedures that cannot be linked to the human subjects, and any disclosure of their responses were not found to place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to subject's financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Because your study is exempt from IRB review, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project.

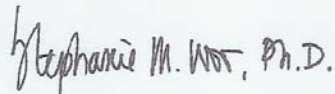
Please note that your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit a Request for Modification form to the GPS IRB. Please be aware that

changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the GPS IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite our best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the GPS IRB as soon as possible. If notified, we will ask for a complete explanation of the event and your response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all further communication or correspondence related to this approval. Should you have additional questions, please contact me. On behalf of the GPS IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Woo, Ph.D.  
Chair, Graduate and Professional Schools Institutional Review Board (GPS IRB)  
Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology  
6100 Center Drive  
Los Angeles, CA 90045  
(310) 258-2845  
[swoo@pepperdine.edu](mailto:swoo@pepperdine.edu)

cc: **Dr. Lee Kats, Associate Provost for Research & Assistant Dean of Research,  
Seaver College**  
**Ms. Ann Kratz, Human Protections Administrator**  
**Dr. Stephanie Woo, Chairperson GPS Institutional Review Board**  
**Ms. Robin Bailey-Chen**  
**Dr. Farzin Madjidi**